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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A MASQUE OF HONOR.

A Saratoga Romance

—BY—

CAROLINE WASHBURN ROCKWOOD.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

One day, not many months ago, a little group of book-lovers met in the editorial sanctum of a well-known periodical, whereupon the conversation drifted into bitterly expressed regrets that there were so many deplorable tendencies in modern fiction.

"On one hand," said a noted critic, who was present, "we have didactic dryness, meted out according to mathematical measure; and on the other there is most loathsome realism. One wearies us because too much microscopic analysis has made it dull, and the other nauseates us because it only smacks of the diseased spots in life. The sole offset to these is the sensationalism of the wildest of impossibilities in one direction, and the sensationalism of sensual indecencies on the other. No one, now-a-days, writes good, wholesome, old-fashioned romances, which can be picked up with the certainty of entertainment assured in advance, read with delight, and put down with regret. When I want

to read fiction which I can enjoy, I have to go back to the writers of a past generation—Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and others of that age. It is useless to look to the present generation for really pleasing fiction."

The most of those who listened to him agreed with him fully, and none dissented in any marked degree.

Among others who heard this sweeping generalization uttered was the writer of this note.

On returning to my lodgings, that day, I found a package of manuscript and a note awaiting me. The note asked me read the manuscript and decide whether it had best be printed or burned. Complying with the first half of this request, in the light of what my critical friend had just said, I was delighted to find that it lacked all of the elements which he deplored, and that it also abounded with other praiseworthy attributes. Consequently I not only advised but urged its publication.

Here it is, and I am sure that there are hosts of novel-readers who will join me in thanking its author for "A Saratoga Romance."

May the 23rd, 1889. LEW VANDERPOOLE.

A MASQUE OF HONOR.

CRUMBS, CRUSTS AND CAKE.

A SARATOGA ROMANCE.

I.

AT THE DRESSMAKER'S.

MARGARET Selden nearly forgot her chronic aversion to Saratoga, as she sat in Madame Miller's parlor, comfortably curled up in a great arm-chair and nearly concealed from all eyes by the window draperies. Through the half-closed blinds and the flickering shadows thrown by the overhanging elms, she watched the constantly changing throng on Broadway, as it passed below her. The August breeze toyed with leaves, dainty toilettes and the scalloped edges of the awnings in front of the "Grand Union" shops, in and out of which an endless stream of humanity was passing, with as many varieties of carriage and expression as generally distinguish patronesses of fashionable shops.

"The Westminster Peal" in Bethesda church

tower was sounding its gentle call to morning prayers, in attestation of the fact that Saratoga is one of the few summer resorts which can boast of earnestness as well as gayety and which, if sometimes too frivolous, does penance for it by the frequency of fervent worship.

As a watering-place, the whole character of Saratoga is unique, for even when it is most intensely mirthful it is never flippant and always impresses the close observer as being even more domestic than it is social. There are many things which contribute to its atmosphere of earnestness. First of all, it is a place where the past—an heroic past—seems always close at hand, and the forceful influence of this, with all that pertains to it, thrusts itself upon the lightest and most heedless, at unexpected moments.

There is, also, the influence of many cultured homes; places where better things than rank and wealth receive first homage, and after these there are, as well, the sanitariums and family hotels, all of which are as dignified as they are well appointed and in many of which there is always morning and evening worship.

In not a few of these, the daily drawing-room devotions are led by celebrated divines, who find it possible to be as impressive and zealous amid social

attractions and claims as when environed by the more majestic stateliness of bronzed and ivoried altar-pieces and multitudinous other church-gatherings.

Nowhere in America, aside from Saratoga, does one meet such a diverse array of representative people, and this, of course, is another dignifying characteristic and one which contributes solidity, as it were, without sombreness. Wit and philosophy jostle each other; theosophists and theologians break bread together with the most urbane complacency; authors hob nob with legal lights, and poets and scientists forget all other rivalries in the predominating one of social brilliancy.

Only a passing thought of all this, however, passes idly through the mind of Margaret, as she pictures to herself the pretty church around the corner, mentally reviewing all its parts, one after the other, as she so well knows them. She can easily fancy the cool and shadowed heights, the chancel floor, bathed in soft rich tints, which fall upon it from the beautiful memorial window above the reredos; the gleaming organ flutings, rising above the bowed head of the vested organist as he fills the church with restful harmonies, and the typically pastoral face of the good rector, who has so long watched over this particular flock. She

can almost hear the subdued rustle and movement of incoming worshipers and is indistinctly conscious of a feeling of self reproval as she recognizes familiar faces among the devoutly disposed who are bending their steps in the direction of the sweet-toned bells.

"What a bright picture it all makes! how well-conditioned and prosperous every one seems. I wonder what people mean by calling this a poor season—"

So mused Margaret, having heard many dissertations upon the unprofitableness of "election year" and the "slowness" of June and July, which seemed so emphatically contradicted by the crush of unstinted elegance in the scene before her.

The stray sun-beams which insisted upon forcing themselves through leaves, blinds and draperies, became harmless elements of beauty, whose sole mission seemed to be to enhance the lovliness of costly fabrics and rare confections, and they won a smile from Margaret as her eyes turned from the street pageant and rested upon the various womanly belongings which were spread out before her. The smile was, partly, the natural result of her delight—as a well ordered daughter of Eve—in tasteful apparel, and, also, was inspired by the sharp and odd

contrast between her present surroundings and those she had known a week before.

She wondered what Arthur Graham would have to say to such a collection of "fripperies," as he irreverently termed gown, ribbons, laces and the like, and forthwith she fell into a train of thought which, judging from her changing color and introverted expression of eyes, included many a subtle feeling not yet ripe for introduction to a cold world—least of all to a fashionable world.

Suddenly her attention was attracted by voices from the other side of the heavy portieres which separated her from the adjacent "fitting room."

"It is charming, Miss Mary, but far too gay for me. Please take off the silver brocade. I much prefer the simple white material with cord and tassels," said one voice, which was followed immediately by another and an expostulative one.

"But, my love, it needs something to brighten it. Why should you dress so like a ghost—"

"It suits me best, *ma mere*; but—you shall have this gown made quite as you wish, dear."

The voice was sweet and as clear as a bell, while the brooding tenderness of the loving protest, suggested a great deal more than it said, to Margaret, who had great faith in the human voice as a reliable exponent of character.

These voices, though muffled and subdued, stirred Margaret strangely, and, without quite realizing what she was doing, she suddenly found herself listening eagerly for the rest of the conversation and full of unaccountable impatience for the moment that should reveal the speakers; but that time was not yet, for into the room where Margaret was lounging there fluttered a trio of Saratoga girls, filling the place with chatter and youthful enthusiasm. "Oh, Kate!" exclaimed one, "Here is the very thing for you: pale green and perfect for your superb corals!"

Kate Berkely, a tall, stately creature, with strongly marked features and an aristocratic bearing, glanced at the evening gown in question, and wondered if it was within her limitations—for, though being the only child of wealthy and doting parents, she also possessed that peculiar and blessed quality of prudence, which so much more frequently accompanies fortune than mitigates poverty.

Her companions at once became absorbed in an inspection of the garments displayed along the length of the handsome rooms, while she calmly and seriously discussed the green costume with Madame's accommodating daughter.

Margaret saw no immediate necessity for leaving

her corner and so made no demonstration, though she knew all the girls well.

"Kate never loses her balance,"—was her quiet cogitation—"I wonder, had I been the daughter of a distinguished Judge, able to live anywhere between here and Egypt, and travel all over the earth, if it would have turned me out one half as clever and level-headed as Kate Berkely!"

Half in indolence and half in mischief, for several minutes she sat, with amused eyes, peeping out from her retreat.

Suddenly, in making the *dètour* of the room, one of the trio, a sweet faced, golden-haired girl caught sight of her.

"Margaret Selden!" she exclaimed. "When did *you* get home and why in the world are you hiding away in corners?—a pretty way to treat us, I *must* say!"

Whereupon Margaret arose to the occasion and greeted her friends, though still keeping watch over the closed portieres and hoping for a speedy appearance of "Miss Mary" and her customers.

"I have been in Saratoga but two days, Amy, and intended surprising you at your reception to-morrow, provided I can get a dress in time, for I came home in *rags*! But oh, girls! *what* a good

time I have had." Here Margaret sighed, with excessive if retrospective bliss.

"Just think of being in a flannel gown from morning to night; out in all sorts of weather—without a thought or care about clothes, crimps or complexion! And above all, being treated like a sensible, useful creature by men as well as women. It was something like living, and I did hate to come back to hops and piazza-shows, they are so tame, after the out-door bracing life."

During this outburst Margaret had, of course, embraced Kate, Amy and her newly married friend, Grace Lincoln, all of whom had met at Madame Miller's quite by accident. This ceremony performed, she resumed her favorite corner, with the benignly satisfied air of one who has not only fulfilled a duty, but indulged in a pleasure.

"Well! I like *that*! What made you come back and why are you in such a hurry for Miller gowns, receptions and all the rest of it, if you hate the whole business so?" questioned pretty Amy, with a half offended air, as she scanned the browned skin of the yacht-struck maiden.

"Oh, Jeanne wrote such doleful letters and seemed to miss me so much, that I did not feel comfortable in staying away from her any longer. Once here, one must do as the Saratogians do.

Kate, I thought you were at Lake George. The papers said so."

"Always believe the papers, my dear! I am at Lake George, practically—came down this morning to get a new gown for the next wedding. It is getting positively ruinous to try to keep up with Hymen's demands this season. Four swell weddings within a few days, you know, in June, and now another this month. I don't see that there can be any more at present unless some new men are imported; the marriagable male population is entirely appropriated, so far as my limited information goes, with the exception of the confirmed bachelors and two or three of Amy's devotees. Amy—child—what is all this I hear about your wholesale conquests, this season. If you were not the very incarnation of goodness and benevolence, I should certainly think you a heartless siren. Confess now! Who is the favored knight, of all the brilliant line?"—and here Kate drolly struck an expectant attitude and looked at Amy, as if resolved to tease the truth out of her on the instant.

Amy shrugged her plump shoulders and gave her curls a pretty toss—

"I am much too busy looking out for the other girls to have any time for nonsense myself. But listen! let me give you a 'straight tip' on the

average girl who comes to Saratoga. She means 'business' and is ready to sacrifice any or all of her friends in getting what she is after, and that is —a rich husband."

"They make it so plain to anybody who will take the trouble to watch them, that I wonder a man can be found stupid enough to believe in their show of sentiment. Why girls, I've tried, more than once, to find even *one* girl with some thing else in her mind; I've only succeeded in—failing! Times beyond number have I called on some particularly innocent-looking new-comers at the hotels, just because I thought they must find it stupid here—not knowing any one. I have invited them to receive with us and have introduced them to everybody I know. Will you believe me? just as soon as they knew a 'working number' of society men off they would go as independent as you please, with no more consideration for me and my plans than if I didn't exist! As far as the men go, it is all right—I have no use for any man that prefers other society—but I do get awfully tired of most of the girls who come here for a purpose!"

Margaret jumped up, with a laugh and patted the indignant speaker affectionately, saying, "You are quite right, Amy dear. They are positively sickening and it is maddening to see that style of

girl manœuvre. Thank goodness, we don't have more of them and they generally stay no longer than Saratoga mosquitoes. My! how they would stare, if they could see you among your poor people. I wish I could paint a picture of you as you looked on the Fourth of July night, taking your Sunday school class home after giving them a jolly celebration. It was a sweet thing for you to do."

"Oh, nonsense! Why praise me? Who spends hours on hours working for the 'Altar Society' and 'The Old Ladies' Home' and 'St. Christina's Home' and goodness only knows how many other societies and 'homes?' *That* is what I call praiseworthy and what I never should have the patience for," (looking affectionately at Grace Lincoln). "There is our bride now. What would become of us without her! What a mercy it is that she married a Saratogian!"

Mrs. Lincoln's reception of Amy Leighton's flattering remarks was at once appreciative and modest. She had always been considered one of the most charming of the Saratogian girls, her husband was as popular as herself, and their new home was the headquarters for their large and delightful circle of friends.

"Thanks, my dear," she answered brightly. "I certainly am devoutly thankful for my 'marcies'

as the old woman said, not the least of which I count my not having to go away from this dear old town and all my lovely friends; but tell me Margaret, what are you having made? Something gorgeous?"

"Oh no, I leave Amy to carry off the splendors of this establishment and content myself with Miller's more modest toilets. What has my dear little Jeanne been doing while I have been away? I have not had time to hear about it from her yet, we are so occupied with guests. Has she behaved herself?"

The three friends exchanged suggestive glances, but Margaret never got her answer, for just then the portieres were drawn aside and Margaret's summons came.

"Good-bye girls, for to-day," she said. "I must not lose a moment," while, greeting "Miss Mary," she hurriedly cast her eyes about the room she was entering and asked, with ill-concealed disappointment in tone and inflection, "Where are the people you have been fitting?"

"They preferred going out this way," was the answer, with a gesture towards a door opening on to an inner hall, which led to the main entrance.

Margaret ventured no further questions concerning them and the important operation of "trying on" proceeded, without delay.

As she stood before the long mirror, however, her mind was much more intent upon memories, which something about the sweet voice of the unseen stranger had stirred, than upon the quiet elegance of the new gown, which so well set forth her dark beauty.

II.

LITERATURE AND PERPLEXITIES.

"The common problem, yours, mine and every one's,
Is——not to fancy what were fair in life,
Provided it could be—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means; a very different thing!"

THESE words from Browning, in well modulated tones and decidedly English accent, fell upon as varied and stony a ground as scriptural antiquity lays claim to.

The reader's voice was resonant and earnest, and through the vistas of *chic* bonnets, coquettish hats and uncovered heads, his face equally earnest as his voice—was occasionally visible.

That he was Yankee born and Yankee bred—so long as his were, chiefly, associations with Cunard Steamers, Harvard University, the Charles river and Back Bay—was no obstacle to his acquisitions in the way of broad a's and well turned r's. That he gloried in possessing the entry to all classes of society, from the shadow of the Boston State House, to the privileges of the distant and conservative Carleton Club, Pall Mall, including all the great and

small schools of fishes sufficient unto themselves which do disport in the vast social waters between, in no wise diminished his hold upon this particular circle of pleasure-satiated, novelty-craving butterflies who had imported him straight from the "Hub" for the laudable purpose of introducing a new and more intellectual element into Saratoga Summer Society.

His *entrèe* not having been limited to those fascinating circles of Athenian Bohemianism, where one may be swell and hilarious; where clever men and women glory in utilizing their wits for their maintainance and are accustomed to precincts where a combination of beer, smoke, orchestral music and refined social intercourse are not only a possibility but a reality, Richard Mannering Howard, was perhaps more of an enthusiast. Being, a man of culture, brains and experience, and, possessing, as he did, such a multitude of goodly gifts, with a portion of ducats sufficient for their proper maintainance, he felt no necessity for hesitating to use his well-trained and agreeable methods of speech and thought for the delectation, elevation and enjoyment of those who belonged, or thought they belonged to his particular ilk.

Blanche Atherton was an enthusiast too. She had listened to the involved sentences, as they fell from

Howard's lips, with an expression of puzzled intentness which was clearly indicative of the laudable and honest effort she was making to follow in the approved channels of poetic expression. That she found that enthusiasm impossible which others felt, or at least assumed to feel, caused her real pain and tormented her self-respect with doubts as to whether there was hypocrisy in her presence there and even in her attentive attitude. In some directions she felt herself equal to really good if not great things, but she also keenly felt the compass of her limitations. Now, poised on her mental tip-toes, in the reach and strain after unattainable heights—attractive to her only because peopled by those she fancied ultra intellectual, she sought to hide her impatience as best she could and to sooth her bewildered and exhausted faculties with the sweet balms of superior companionship and such providential glimpses of poetic revelation as might, under the circumstances, fall to her lot.

Mrs. Habersham was another earnest listener. Indeed, she was nothing, if not earnest. Her stately figure and strongly beautiful face; her keen insight into the multitudinous bearings of her world; her tact, philanthrophy and great wealth together with rare appreciation of the true and the

admirable, placed her among the foremost of her sex, *nolens volens*.

The "Kensington," where the reading was being given, was her favorite summer home and she never seemed more "At Home" in its drawing room, than on this summer morning, as, with her friends and associates about her, she presided over an assemblage as brilliant and distinguished as had ever been entertained in her magnificent Washington house.

She often said, "people make a place—not things," and yet, while thoroughly honest in expressing this sentiment and consistent in reducing it to practice, she was never known to fail in paying careful attention to all details of comfort and elegance as well as social delights.

While far beyond the carping criticism which so invariably distinguishes the questionably-placed and self-doubting aspirants to social recognition, Mrs. Habersham took honest pride in gathering about her only the men and women whose aims in life are high and purposeful.

The necessity of judging between the real and the false, which falls most heavily upon women with families to protect from the undesirable, often forced her to draw the distinctive line where it would have been more agreeable to her to leave it

subject to the pleasure and judgment of others, but Mrs. Habersham always acted upon strong as well as broad principles, and, on this especial occasion, she looked over the circle about her with pardonable satisfaction in both its quantity and quality—modestly attributing much of her success in this new departure to the reader's reputation and drawing power, rather than her own management.

Almost unconsciously she nodded her head in cordial approbation of the poet's sound philosophy, as the foregoing lines were read, and then fell to scrutinizing a quiet figure seated near her, whose face indicated absolute indifference, or an affectation of it.

Closely and wonderingly she looked; the expression and pose were so ungirlish—so unnatural.

Richard Mannering Howard continued his reading only to that golden moment which waits on expectancy and avoids satiety. Turning then to Mrs. Habersham he received her very cordial thanks as he shudderingly perceived Mrs. Lucretia Simmerton bearing down upon him in a toilette worthy of a too suddenly transplanted and only semi-civilized squaw.

"Ye Gods! if Madam S., could see herself as others see her, just *once*!" he whispered.

Mrs. Simmerton was one of those who adore the

ostentatious, vulgarly mistaking it for elegance, but she was a kindly soul and arrayed herself in her heavy velvets and laces morning, noon and night, all through the season, with tireless effort to please, and asking no greater reward than the conventional piazza greeting and the amiable, if hypocritical, compliments of those who annually and willingly accepted her New York hospitality, even while whispering among themselves of her harmless peculiarities.

"How *beau*—ti—fully you do read, Mr. Howard," she said, shaking the cascade of springy curls on either side of the chalky, simpering face, as she kept her head vibrating from side to side, in coquettish salutation.

"But Browning does not tell us how to find out 'what may be' does he?"

"I fancy that must be our own discovery, Mrs. Simmerton," politely answered Mr. Howard—inwardly reflecting upon the happy and immediate results to the person before him, if she only might be taught what a decent and altogether estimable creature she could be made, with appropriate settings and adornments.

"I care little for poetry, as you know, Dick!" broke in a bright ringing voice; "but I dote on your readings, though it seems odd enough to be

listening to you here in Saratoga! It would not surprise me in the least to have Louise Chandler Moulton and 'Jenkins' appear upon the scene, and I really feel as though Susan Hale cannot be far off and that five minutes walk would bring us to 'Youngs.' I am realistic, as usual, you see!"

Howard seized the elegantly gloved hand and looked with unconcealed admiration upon the perfectly costumed figure and enthusiastic face.

"Don't tell me you hate poetry, after that box of flowers you sent me when I was shut up last winter, Kate Worthington! They were living poems and you—well, you are an inspiration in that gown."

She was a queenly creature and womanly enough to be glad of it. She had had her crosses though—for some of her fellow Athenians, despairing of finding a flaw in her pedigree or social status, had taken to criticizing her "superabundance of spirits" and her "fondness of dress." Fortunately, however, such failed utterly in clouding the loving kindness of her great nature; indeed, it is extremely doubtful if she ever realized their existence, but went on the even or uneven tenor of her busy way, giving many a lift to friends when "down" and as a rule, calmly indifferent to the misapprehensions of those smaller natures which, of needs, must run in grooves or not run at all.

Richard Mannering Howard had known her all his life and was manly enough to appreciate her thoroughly. As they exchanged home news and pleasant reminiscences, Mrs. Worthington suddenly inquired, "Who is the aristocratic young woman just beyond Mrs. Habersham?"

Howard had to change his position to look in the direction referred to, and, on discovering the person in question he started, looked again—scanning the cold yet lovely face with absorbing attention—as he exclaimed, "By Jove!" and slowly sank into a chair, without lowering his eyes.

His manner bordered closely upon agitation and he did not seem to hear Kate Worthington's questions, nor consider her evident amazement at his peculiar conduct—he could only sit bolt upright, staring at the girl who so unaccountably moved him.

"Richard, is this love or madness?" at last demanded his friend, tapping his relaxed hand with her fan.

With a decided effort, he lowered his eyes, gathered himself together and said, "Kate, be kind and help me to get out of this place. Say anything you like, in excuse for my sudden going and —let me see you this evening. I *can't* explain here."

"Go quickly then," she answered, with instant comprehension that it was no joking matter, "or Miss Atherton will cut you off. I will see you when ever you please."

Giving him a gentle push toward the door, she turned to cover his retreat, just in time to receive Blanche Atherton, as she reached the spot she had been working toward ever since the close of the reading.

It must be confessed that her heroic endurance, for the past hour, had not been for the purpose of greeting Mrs. Worthington, yet her cordial salutation suggested nothing less complimentary.

"What a crowd! I thought I never should reach you," she said. "Has it not been a great success? Has Mr. Howard gone?"

"Yes, poor fellow! I was afraid he would not pull through, for he was nearly wild with a nervous headache: a less self-controlled man would have disappointed Mrs. Habersham this morning."

Kate Worthington was thankful for the inch of fact that sustained her ell of fiction. "Do you think people liked him?" she added—by way of ending that branch of the conversation.

"Oh yes! every one seemed charmed with Mr. Howard, Mr. Howard's voice, Mr. Howard's manner, and—themselves! *Entres nous*, Mrs. Worthing-

ton, *do* you think many people really enjoy Browning? For myself, people like Mr. Howard and poets like Browning, make me feel like a fraud and a dissembler. I have no more right to smile and look happy, during such an hour as we have had this morning, than if Mr. Howard had been reading Sanscrit."

"Nor I, according to your code, my dear, but it is the least of my troubles that I fail to comprehend poetic flights, at times. I love the *atmosphere* and should have been miserable if I could not have been here this morning. Don't pull your dear honest soul to pieces too cruelly—any one that can sing as you can, is fit company for the Gods, childie—" and Mrs. Worthington laid a caressing hand on Blanche's flushed cheek as she turned from her to speak to Mrs. Marston.

"Do you suppose,"—began the latter—"I can get Mr. Howard to stay over for my next reception and give me a short reading, Mrs. Worthington? I would cheerfully listen to the Constitution of the United States, if that happened to be his choice. I never have heard a voice that was so appealing and restful."

"I am so glad to have my old friend appreciated here in Saratoga, Mrs. Marston. Bostonians are fond and proud of him, of course. I am not sure

what his plans are. He spoke of going to Bar Harbor again—he is quite the rage there, you know."

Just then Mrs. Habersham joined them.

"Do you think Mr. Howard can be prevailed upon to stay over Wednesday?" she asked, eagerly.

"We *must* hear him again—why, where is he?"

Mrs. Worthington hastened to give the necessary explanations and message, and, as soon as she could bring it about, asked the name of the young woman whose presence seemed to have had such a startling effect upon Howard.

"There she is, just going on the piazza—the most distinguished looking girl I have seen in Saratoga this year. Who is she?"

"A young friend of mine who is staying here with her mother, for the waters. They are southerners and spend their life in travelling over the earth in pursuit of health.

"The father died three years ago, just after they went abroad and the only son was killed, soon after, in a theatre holacaust, in Italy.

"This poor girl is very delicate and nervous and greatly dislikes meeting people,—I was surprised to see her come into the rooms this morning,—I suppose she came to please her mother;—By the way,

do you know that handsome white-haired woman, to whom Judge McHenry is speaking, Mrs. Worthington?"

Kate smiled joyously as she discovered in the person pointed out, one of her own best friends.

"Is she not a beauty? I coaxed her to come and hear Mr. Howard, though she is in deep mourning. Let me introduce her to you."

Together they crossed the room and joined the popular and genial judge, whose pretty neice was carrying on a tremendous flirtation with three men at once, while a stately woman with snow-white hair, heavy black eye-brows and wonderful hazel eyes, sat in a comfortable chair near by, in close and earnest conversation with the distinguished legal light.

There was the fascinating grace of a Van Dyke portrait in the poise of her figure, as well as in the striking contrast of coloring and the high-bred features of Miss Scotts-Bardwell, as she sat—framed in deep mourning garb—holding the absorbed attention of her friend, by the power of her conversational and personal charm.

Saratoga had been her favorite "tonic" ever since her childhood, and many were the romances of which she had been the inspiration; but no one had succeeded in winning her, though there were

tragedies and perhaps comedies in her life-history.

Mrs. Habersham welcomed her with quiet warmth. "Mrs. Habersham, I hope I am not an intruder. Mrs. Worthington has told me so much about Mr. Howard's reading, that I was tempted into this corner, and I assure you I have enjoyed it very much," apologized Miss Scotts-Bardwell, to the hostess of the morning.

"You are most heartily welcome," was the quick response. "Indeed, I have no right to exclude any one from this public drawing-room, but if I *had*, you never would be one of them. Perhaps Mrs. Simmerton might, if she will insist upon such frightful apparel," Mrs. Habersham added, *sotto voce*, as that worthy woman passed them, waving her second or third "good bye."

More greetings, congratulations aud adieus followed closely upon each other, and soon the stream of would-be literary devotees was lost in the great rush and flow of the general crowd and then, the recently bustling and buzzing drawing-room of the Kensington was left to the soft play of light breezes and the brief hush of a summer mid-day hour.

III.

THE SECRET OF POWER.

RICHARD Mannering Howard reached the solitary and shadowed heights of Congress Spring Park, by the most direct route from the Kensington—down Circular Street to the upper entrance.

Not being a stock-holder, boarding-house keeper, village official, newspaper man or clergyman, he found it necessary to pay his fee—a circumstance which was annoying only because it involved the necessity of his concentrating his mind upon a material subject, until he could fish out of his pocket the essential small coin. Having accomplished this important duty, he struck into the path which promised most seclusion and took posession of a settee, rather to save himself further exertion than from any expectation of gaining physical comfort, for he was not in a mental condition likely to be prelusive to any kind of repose.

Why, he wondered, was he, reasonable, self-contained and calm as he usually had the right to con-

sider himself—so unnerved by the sight of a woman's face? Had he lived thirty-two well-conditioned and carefully guarded years—Boston years too, mainly—only to find himself, all at once, on a level with the most inexperienced and impressionable, of his sex?

Did force of habit, association and self-discipline count for nothing, generally, or was he—Richard Mannering Howard—exceptionally lacking in all that goes to make a man strong, in time of trial?

All these and many other thoughts and questions flooded his mind and turned the sweet summer murmurings of leaf, fountain, insect and bird life to jarring discord, for his over-wrought nerves.

The still, cold face, despite his most manfully-determined efforts, rose vividly before him, cutting off all the rest of the world from his mental vision and giving him, in return, nothing but dull emptiness and indefinable longings.

As he carelessly scanned the couples and groups scattered here and there through the grounds, he wondered how many of them were either necessary to, or really happy with each other, and then found himself envying a thriftless-looking pair of rustics, who were evidently too ignorant either to simulate or conceal their awkward affection.

Just below him wound a path which lay like a

ribbon on the side of the wooded hill, and led to the lower grounds, now bright with flower-beds, ornamental shrubs and pleasant resting places.

He could see pedestrians as they entered the path, just above him and again as they passed below—losing them in the curves of the slope, to have them sometimes reappear lower down.

Among these apparently objectless strollers, was a man, who, with hat removed, the better to enjoy the fresh and perfumed air, sauntered slowly down the hill, bracing his tall and shapely figure against the somewhat sharp decline and evidently enjoying his surroundings in the fullest degree.

"*He* finds the world all right, I fancy—handsome fellow! probably has everything his own way; such men always do," soliloquized Howard, envying the stranger's tranquillity after a manner which would have been impossible to him at any former time in his life.

As he reluctantly turned from this debonnaire saunterer, he glanced farther down, along one of the lower turns in the path, where his eyes rested upon a lithe figure which was making the easy ascent slowly and languidly, yet with a certain air of ever-present self-restraint. It was a willowy and youthful figure—but slightly rounded, of medium height, pronouncedly girlish, and still to a remarkable

degree suggesting all that is best of that which is counted womanliness.

The small head was set well upon the slender neck; the abundant brown hair lay in thick coils above the delicate ears and revealed an almost ideal forehead.

More remarkable still, perhaps, were her deep, hazel eyes—so strangely weary and listless for one so young, and which, as she approached Howard, were bent aimlessly upon space, with the same expression of resigned and queenly indifference which he already knew so well.

Half breathlessly, he marked the perfection of her shimmering white draperies which were undulant with elegancies of sweep and fold that no figure less graceful could have lent them. Nothing about her, however, was more pleasing than her modesty—so dignified and yet so unassuming and wonderfully enhanced by the chaste and unrelieved whiteness of her attire. The only touch of color about her was in the ripe delicacy of her lips, which triumphantly proclaimed the ascendency of youth over physical and mental ills. The sunlight vainly endeavored to caress her pearly complexion into a betrayal of ruddy brightness, but it succeeded only in winning a responsive favor from the lurking gold in her hair, where it escaped the protection of a

white sun-shade which served the double office of hat and umbrella.

Howard's gaze increased its intensity. His slender hands closed, with quick nervous force, upon the inoffensive cane with which he had been playing. His dilating nostrils, flushed cheeks and whole attitude, evidenced concentrated watchfulness, while his sensitive mouth and deep-set eyes revealed admiration and tenderness. A curious tremor ran over him, such as often emphasises the earnestness of reserved and strong natures.

On she came, up the hill, with no modification of her slow but even steps; looking above and beyond her, with the eyes that disregard immediate surroundings.

Hidden, for a moment, by a clump of shrubbery again her dress stood out in bold relief against the brilliant greens of grass and tree.

Howard questioned his best course: to stay where he was and suffer the cold reception he had every reason to expect, or to move away from the path and prolong the pleasure of looking upon her. While he was weighing the matter, a sudden and dreadful change came over her. Her parasol fell from her hand—her eyes became fixed on some object as yet hidden from Howard's sight, and her left hand clutched a rustic chair for support.

Another instant revealed the handsome stranger, whom Howard had already noticed, on his way down the same path which the girl was ascending and but a few paces from her.

Before Howard could collect himself sufficiently to move, his astonishment changed into terror by seeing her totter and fall prone at the man's feet.

A leap down the bank brought him to her senseless form as the stranger exclaimed, "What is the matter? Has she fainted? What can we do?"—Howard's first impulse was to turn upon him, as the cause of the trouble, but one glance at the noble and anxious countenance before him, disarmed his fears and suspicious. Together they lifted and carried the unconscious girl to the nearest available resting-place, which was a grassy bank under a neighboring maple.

As helpless as only two men could be, under such circumstances, they looked about them for assistance, but no one was in sight.

At Howard's suggestion, the stranger went in search of a physician, leaving him alone with the still white figure, which more closely resembled marble than anything living.

Howard felt himself hardly tried by fate. Here in the midst of the prodigality of summer's lovliness, lay the only woman who had ever touched

his heart deeply, and he did not know whether she would ever stir again or not. No human being was in sight. They were together, yet as much divided as if the Universe lay between them.

On the one hand, he could have wished every moment a year—on the other, his great fear for her life made each second an age of agony.

How beautiful the pure sweet face was, as it rested against the bank!

Footsteps suddenly broke the silence and ended Howard's ruminations. He hastened to meet whoever was approaching, by this time being fairly desperate with anxiety and fear.

A tall, middle-aged woman, with the unmistakable air of an old family servant, came swiftly across the grass toward him, and, catching sight of the prostrate figure, passed him with a respectful bow, exclaiming: "My poor Missie! Did you see her fall, sir? We did not know she was in the Park until a moment ago and I hurried right after her, for she has looked real poorly for the last week or two. Just as I came from the spring I heard a gentleman telling some one who was just driving off, where he would find a doctor and I asked him if any body was hurt. When he said 'a young lady had fainted, in the grounds,' I mistrusted right off it was my 'poor dear,' and sure enough it is!

Thank you very much sir—I ain't a bit scared. She has these spells every now and then and I know just what to do for her." All the while she was talking, she was kneeling by her mistress and administering restoratives, which she took from a tidy, black silk bag that hung at her waist.

"She isn't strong enough to walk so far, in the heat of the day—" she continued, as she deftly bathed the white hands and tenderly rearranged the still unconscious form.

"There now! she will soon come to—please sir, did I not see you in Italy?"

"Yes," answered Howard—"I remembered you, as soon as I saw you, but I had no idea Mrs. and Miss Campbell were in this country, until an hour ago. How shall we get her home? Shall I go for a carriage?"

"Oh, no, thank you, sir. I can manage alone, when she gets over this turn—and—please sir, I think she wouldn't like anybody but me to be by, when she comes to—she is very easy upset, sir, you see—and I have taken care of her since she was knee high to nothing—so I know mostly, what to do."

Howard, respecting the woman's foresight, only waited to give her his card, with the injunction to present his compliments to both the ladies. More

he dared not venture. If they wished him to come to them, they would make it known. He quite congratulated himself upon still possessing even that much pride and self-respect.

So he left them—going across the Park and out of the main entrance, towards the "States," after first leaving word at the office that, if a physician should arrive, in search of the young lady who had fainted, to tell him, and the gentleman who would be with him, that she had been cared for, and to give his card to both of them.

It is safe to say, that Howard was but a poor companion at dinner that day, and whatever became of him between three o'clock and eight, he never told a soul.

It is certain that he was not on the Avenue, nor at the lake, nor did Mrs. Worthington catch a glimpse of him, until he touched her shoulder, as she sat in a corner of the "State's" piazza, after supper, surrounded by a gay party.

"Will you take a turn with me, Kate?" he said, quietly.

She could always "manage" for a friend, and it did not take her long to make every one understand that she "needed a little constitutional" for she "never got half enough exercise in Saratoga," and off they went, together.

What Kate Worthington was told, during the next hour, shall be held sacredly her secret, for the present.

When it was time to bid Howard "good night" she looked very womanly and sympathetic. He still lingered a moment in silence; then she whispered, "I begin to understand why you can make your readings so telling, Dick—people must *suffer*, before they can touch others."

IV.

PUZZLING AGITATION.

WHEN Beatrice Campbell opened her eyes, in the Park, she was dazed and terrified. Regarding her old nurse, Mason, with a perplexed stare, she put her hand to her head, as if trying to recall something, glancing about her, at the same time, with evident dread as she gasped—

"Where is he? Has he gone?"

"Mr. Howard? Yes Missie; he was afraid of troubling you by staying. Are you better?"

"*Mr. Howard!*" she exclaimed; and then—suppressing an involuntary question, with considerable effort, she changed the subject by asking: "When did you come, Mason? Did I faint again? I thought I had outgrown that stupid habit. Take me home. I can walk now."

Leaning heavily upon Mason's arm, the still trembling girl started on her way back to the Kensington.

"Why did you not call me to come with you, dear Missie?" questioned Mason. "I was all ready

and waiting and you know your Mamma does not like me to leave you go alone."

"I felt like being alone, Mason. Do not say anything to Mamma about my fainting. It will only worry her, without doing any good. Stop a minute; I must rest."

They seated themselves on a bench near at hand, remaining there for some little time, until Beatrice regained sufficient strength to start again, during which interval the girl's furtive and anxious glances over the Park, in a way so unlike her usual indifference, filled Mason with alarm.

While resting, Beatrice said: "I do not think Saratoga agrees with me, Mason. I am no stronger than I was at the sea-shore, and—the crowd tires me. I think we will try the mountains if Mamma is willing. Can you pack everything by to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, Missie, but what shall I do about this card? Mr. Howard told me to give it to your Mamma."

Beatrice took the card, regarding the name and address with compressed lips and increasing pallor. "Where did you see Mr. Howard, Mason?" she asked, at length, without looking up.

"He was looking about for some one to help you, after you fainted, Missie. Poor young man!

he was as white and a deal more miserable looking than you was: not being used to fainting spells, most likely, he was frightened most to death."

As Beatrice made no answer, Mason continued with, "I remembered seeing him in Italy and, if I hadn't had my hands full, bringing you to, it would have been real pleasant to see a familiar face, among so many strange ones. Mighty queer, though, that he should turn up, here in America, just in time to catch you—wasn't it, Missie? Do you remember seeing him before you fainted away?"

Mason's suspicions were aroused that the swoon had been caused by something more than mere weakness. With the privilege of an old and valued servant, she talked on hoping to glean some information, but she met with no encouragement from her young mistress, who seemed to be entirely absorbed by her thoughts.

At length, rising as suddenly as her weakness permitted, she took Mason's arm and they continued their return to the hotel. As they were about entering, Beatrice said, "I will keep the card. You need not say anything to Mamma about it."

Still Mason noticed her air of excitement and wondered at the sigh of relief which escaped her as

she stepped inside her own parlor and threw herself on the lounge.

Books, pictures and *bric-a-brac* were scattered here and there in home-like fashion. Hard to please, indeed, would have been the one who could find fault with the handsome appointments of that luxurious suite of rooms, but Beatrice covered her face with her hands and gave no heed to her surroundings. "Let me rest a while," she said to Mason—"and then call Mamma."

* * * * * * * *

An hour later, Mrs. Campbell came in from Mrs. Habersham's apartments and found her daughter sitting idly by the window, with an open book lying in her lap. She was looking out into the tree tops and was not aware of her mother's presence until she felt a kiss upon her forehead, when she turned, with a smile, to greet her.

"What have you been doing since you left me, dearie? I stayed too long with Carrie Habersham and we are late for dinner. Why, Beatrice! are you ill?"

"No, Mamma: only tired. I went into the park and suppose I walked too far. Don't dress for dinner; you are all right, as you are. Sit down and talk with me for a little while. Do you know, dear, I fancy Saratoga is not quite bracing enough

for me. Would you very much mind trying the mountains for a while?"

Mrs. Campbell sat down by Beatrice and took both her hands in her own, as she looked intently at the beloved face.

"You *are* ill, my darling," she said, quickly and anxiously. "Your cheeks are flushed, your pulse is high and I am sure you are feverish. What *is* the matter."

"Nothing, ma mére—don't worry. I was foolish to start out at mid-day for a walk; but the Park looked so cool and inviting that I could not resist the temptation.

"Do let us get up among the forests and hills. I want to live out of doors more. I shall be all right as soon as I can look off over the valleys and smell the pines. Why may we not go to-morrow?"

Then with quick loving gesture she turned to her mother, saying, in an altogether different tone, "Poor Marmsie—how selfish it is in me to drag you away from your beloved Kensington, your waters and Mrs. Habersham! You see you have quite spoiled me, dearest; but I will not say another word about going away. I dare say I am quite as well here as I shall be any where—so forgive me and kiss me again."

But this heroic determination was at once nipped in the bud by Mrs. Campbell.

"Dear child," she said, "let us go, by all means. We can try Elizabethtown for awhile, and then come back here, if we choose. What does it matter where we are, if you are only well and happy. Oh, do *try* and be both, for my sake."

Beatrice returned her mother's solicitous embrace with clinging tenderness. For a moment she acted as if she wished to make a confession, or give way to some impulse born of strong feeling, but, on second thought, she controlled herself and all she said was:—"Ma mére, we are everything to each other and—I *am* trying."

V.

AN ACCIDENT.

THERE had been an unusually brilliant succession of festivities, ranging from elegant cottage hospitality, to varied social outbursts in the hotels and Congress Spring Park. Nearly every day had been crowded to surfeit from early July to mid-September. But all good things ultimately come to an end and the gay Saratoga season was now closing—and, like a summer's day in the Alps, it was "closing in color."

The garden party at the "Grand Union" had, in every sense, climaxed the glittering, festive parade, and now, like arrows eager to be sped, beaux and belles, intriguing mammas and purse-proud papas, had hied themselves away to the autumn resorts, and sensible people were left at last to enjoy the peculiar and satisfying charms of the "Great Spa," in the golden haze and mellowness of late September and its balmy sister-month, October.

But this exodus had not, by any means, included *all* the lovers of fun and frolic; there was, still, among the more grave and thoughtful, many an

irrepressible "cutter-up" of social "high jinks."

Now and then, too, there was—stranded here in some unaccountable way—a rapid-pated dude; a creature willing enough to be gay and entertaining, but lacking the necessary brains to carry the willingness into effect. Here too, were bronzed and vigorous artists caught on the home stretch from a summer's sketching tour among the northern woods: delightful addenda to social life.

One morning, at the inception of this quieter season, the early light fell brightly upon a young girl, as she half sat and half reclined in a well-appointed village cart. Her hands held the reins with a proper degree of firmness and she guided her high-stepping cob with the skill of correct training and much experience, past the North Broadway cottages and into Woodlawn Park.

Her whole attention, however, seemed to be centred upon her companion, who was slightly her senior and a striking contrast to her in form, features, complexion and bearing.

"Margaret, I have promised and I must go," said the fair driver, and then, arousing herself, her indolent attitude was suddenly changed for one of energetic uprightness and her blue eyes eagerly questioned the serious face beside her.

"Don't you like me to go?" she asked, half wistfully.

A pause followed. The listener seemed inclined to ignore or repulse both question and questioner; but the face of the first speaker betokened a fixed purpose, and, after a searching glance at her silent companion, she added, "I cannot imagine why you are always annoyed when I go out with Stephen Westland. There is no love lost between you two certainly, and so it can't be *jealousy*," she declared archly and with a gleam of mischief.

Margaret Selden started and answered quickly: "*Jealousy!* No, I loath the man! I cannot make you understand how much it distresses me to see any intimacy between you and him. His very charm of manner fills me with dread, for it increases the danger of his influence over you. Jeanne, dear! trust me in this matter. I have said but little, hoping that he would soon weary of this quiet cottage life and go away. I never meet him if I can avoid it—I'd rather see a snake! Smooth, plausible, selfish, heartless and—yes—*wicked* as I believe him to be, how *can* I endure to see him hanging about you, my dear Jeanne. He is clever enough to deceive the very elect!"

The girl in her earnestness had seized Jeanne's arm. Her voice was full of deep indignation and her

face like iron in its over-wrought intensity. No trace of the ease-loving Margaret of our former acquaintance remained, in the set expression of her curled lips and the scornful light of her eyes.

Her friend regarded her with blank amazement. "Why, Madge! how can you say such dreadful things of one so kind and considerate as Mr. Westland always is!"

Margaret moved impatiently.

"Jeanne," she said, "you are just the girl to bring joy and pride to a man's heart and home, and why can't you like Arthur Graham? *There* is a man that I would be perfectly contented to see you marry. A man of honor and as tender and delicate as a woman. Intellectual—serious in his life work, and well enough placed to satisfy any one. He adores you and is worth a million Westlands!"

Here Margaret suddenly looked off, over the hills and intervening slopes stretching out before them, and so did not observe the expression of Jeanne's face. She only heard the quiet answer, which came through lips upon which a smile hovered.

"No one but yourself ever did me the honor to dedicate Mr. Graham so entirely to my service:—but, Madge, will you not go with me this evening

to Mrs. Marston's? You might sacrifice yourself to *that* extent, dear!"

They were now speeding out of the southern exit from the Park, and, swiftly passing the handsome Clement Avenue row, soon drew up before one of the loveliest of the summer residences.

Jeanne threw the reins to the waiting groom, jumped lightly out upon the steps and then, turning with a quick movement, laughingly cried, "I won't let you out, Madge, until you promise!"

As she stood, with one pretty foot on the step of the cart and the other on the piazza floor, her golden hair gleaming in the sunlight, her eyes laughing a protest against her friend's sombre resentment, and her lightly poised figure barring the latter's way, the horse—impatient for his stable—suddenly started, throwing both girls off their balance and hurling Jeanne violently against an iron hitching-post.

With a sharp cry of terror, Margaret threw out her hands to save Jeanne, but without avail. She had fallen prostrate and her fair head lay motionless upon the stone steps.

A moment later the horse was stopped and Margaret hurried back, where tender hands were carrying into the cottage the apparently lifeless form of Jeanne Langley.

VI.

INOPPORTUNELY CALLED AWAY.

GUESTS were fast filling the imposing and elegant home of Mrs. Marston and the hostess was eagerly and anxiously scrutinizing each new arrival while according to each a courteous and cordial welcome.

Not far from her were Judge McHenry and his wife, surrounded by a group whose faces were equally familiar: one of the legal gentleman's attendant satellites was a political leader of renown recently elected to a high position of public trust. His urbane countenance now made familiar all over the country by the combined agencies of transparencies and the illustrated press, was now beaming with unconcealed admiration upon dark-eyed smiling Mrs. Hinton, who was resplendent in a Worth costume, a charming study in dazzling whiteness, superbly accented by diamonds in her hair, and by the same gems and an accompaniment of pearls and white roses at her corsage.

Just beyond them, a noted general, a scarred and battle-worn veteran of the late war and the hero of

many a personal conflict, as well, was holding a small court of old and new friends, among whom were Mrs. Worthington, admirably arrayed in a toilette of green and white; Mr. and Mrs. Nahan, who are the envy of many less happy couples and the admiration of all; Mrs. Ely and her two popular sons; Captain McNight and his queenly wife; Grace Atherton, in a light blue toilette, which added just the needful coloring to her rather too fair complexion; gallant Colonel Washington, whose coolness and bravery had saved the life of a trio of friends, a few evenings before, when threatened with complete demoralization from run-away horses, and scores of other well-known personages, including the Leightons, the Berkleys, the Lincolns and Mrs. Habersham, whose handsome husband was with her.

A clever writer of books and songs who, though still youthful, had already borne two husband's names, including the title of baroness, stood a little to Mrs. Marston's right, deep in conversation with a society man whose name has become synonomous with defunct dude-dom, yet who deserves a higher place in the estimation of his fellow-men, being really a man of keen wit, better taste than he always shows, and kindly feeling. Mrs. Mannering and a trio of neighboring cottagers were discussing a charitable plan for swelling the "Home of the Good

Shepherd" fund, while a critical group of *jeunesse dorée*, mostly Trojans, stood before a French window, inspecting the arrivals and indulging in gossip.

Cottagers, residents and hotel guests continued to swell the throng and yet the hostess remained at her post.

The clock in the hall struck the half hour after ten before her waiting was rewarded. Across the room came a man, bowing right and left as he made his way to Mrs. Marston's side.

Her reception of him was almost imperious.

"Why are you so late?" she demanded. "You know I depended on you."

"My dear Agnes," he answered, "I could hardly make up my mind to come at all. Have you not heard? Miss Langley was thrown from her cart this morning, was seriously injured and is now dangerously ill. Miss Selden does not leave her a moment and Mrs. Maxwell is half beside herself with anxiety."

Mrs. Marston regarded the grave, earnest face, so like her own, with a curious expression and answered in a low tone and with peculiar coldness.

"How very sad! I had not heard. But—may I ask—why should Miss Langley's condition incapacitate you for coming to my house, Stephen?"

Her keen dark eyes scrutinized him sharply while her color slightly deepened. It would have been hard for an on-looker to have determined whether she loved or hated the man before her.

He straightened his tall figure, folded his hands behind him and returned her look with one equally intent. The under-current of strong feeling was carefully veiled in both and the forced calm of conventional courtesy rested upon both faces, but they both realized the tension of nerve which accompanies suppressed emotion.

She waited his answer but a moment.

"Miss Langley is very dear to me, Agnes—" his tone was deep and tender—"I am both shocked and anxious. Is it strange then that I do not relish this gaiety?„

Impressed with his apparently unexpected frankness, she regarded him curiously.

"I am afraid you are in earnest, Stephen, but is it quite safe?" she said, constrainedly.

"As safe as being in love ever is!" he answered, with an emphatic shrug of his broad shoulders. "She has never given me any rights beyond the merest friendship," he added, "but—I *wish* you would let me off to-night. This sort of thing is frightfully out of tune with my thoughts and feelings, dear."

"*And What About Elsie?*" was Mrs. Marston's sudden question, as the stern doubting expression came back into her eyes. Then she started back a little, for she seemed to have touched an unfortunate chord which caused him to turn almost fiercely upon her.

"Why call up that old pain, Agnes?" he cried passionately, after a moment's conflict with himself.

She hesitated, apparently not knowing what answer to make, and by so doing lost the opportunity of answering at all, for guests claimed her attention and Stephen Westland made the most of this providential interposition by instant flight.

Out into the night he passed, throwing himself upon a seat at the shadowed end of the long piazza.

The clear September moon illumined the ground and its flickering light fell through the vine leaves upon the floor beside him.

The sound of music and the murmur of voices came in a subdued way from the ball-room, and he caught frequent glimpses of the figures of the dancers as they glided over the floor.

"It is all so pitiful," he muttered.

"Poor little Jeanne, lying bruised and fevered, in her darkened room—indifferent alike to life and to me; and with that proud distant Miss Selden,

whose every look seems to resent my very existence; what can make that girl hate me so?"

It was a question he had asked himself a hundred times. He wondered whether any other man had ever found this life so tangled—and then his mind went back to the days when, hardly out of college, he had yielded to his mother's wishes and the wiles of a dark-eyed daughter of the South—a soft, purring, radiantly beautiful and passionate creature, irresistible in her tropical intensity. The force of her nature had, for a few short months, chained him to her; then came alternate heights of ecstacy and depths of unhappiness—followed by gradations of doubt and misery—until the climax came which left him still a boy in years, but prematurely aged with the disgust and weariness of a disappointed man.

His nature had been noble in its ambitions and tastes, and hers, selfish, narrow and unprincipled.

Soon tiring of her boy-husband and of domestic life, she had thrown off all restraint—deserting him for companions and scenes more congenial to her sordid soul.

He now, once more, sadly reviewed the grief and unavailing regret of his gentle mother, who, shocked by the wreck her mistaken influence had made of her son's happiness, had yielded her frail hold upon

life, leaving Stephen sole guardian of his sister Agnes.

His eyes grew dim as he recalled that dying scene—now so far back in the past—and the confidence and love she had then given him such proof of. In return, he had promised to carefully guard his young sister and to have patience with his head-strong reckless brother.

"Is she content with me now?" he wondered—lifting his eyes heavenward.

From the day of her death, Stephen had devoted himself to Agnes until another day, now three years ago, when she had married.

Mark had roamed the world over since his mother's death, using his money to his own and other people's destruction, but seldom crossing either his brother's or sister's path.

Agnes was a child of fourteen when Stephen made his mad marriage and was unsophisticated enough then to be completely fascinated by her beautiful sister-in-law. When the latter disappeared, the reason was carefully concealed from the innocent girl, and there had always lingered in her heart a feeling of tenderness for the absent one, which a morbid sensitiveness and sense of chivalry on Stephen's part, had allowed to remain undisturbed.

She had occasionally heard of "Mrs. Westland" as being here and there, in European centres of gaiety, and, without comment or explanation, had always blamed her brother more than she did his wife for their separation.

Matters had gone on in this way for years and it was without Agnes' knowledge that the wanderer had died, in a strange land and among strangers.

Such a feeling had grown up between Stephen and Agnes on this subject, that he had never spoken of his wife's death; not realizing what might result from his silence. Now, for the first time since his freedom had come to him he realized that his sister had a right, while supposing him a married man, to consider him terribly in the wrong in thinking of any woman's love, and an appreciation of this had first stung him when the sudden and scornful question, "What about Elsie?" was asked.

Alone there, in the night, his cheek flushed as his sensitive soul was filled with a conception of the thoughts which must have forced that tone and question.

Starting to his feet, with the determination of finding her and explaining everything without further delay, he hurried into the house, but only to be taken possession of by an old friend of his mother's, whose name had always been a house-

hold word but whose face he now saw for the first time, as she seized his hand, when he was passing her.

"My dear boy, how like your mother you are! Much more so than when I saw you before. By the way, why in the world did you not come back and speak to me that time, at the Rodneys'? I was really quite hurt."

"*Rodneys'!*" he exclaimed. "Where is that?"

"Tut, tut, dear boy, don't try to hoodwink me in that fashion—Mrs. Rodney introduced you as our dear old schoolmate's son and you bowed and said your mother had often spoken of Mrs. Jameson as one of her dearest friends—just then some one called you off and you left, promising to return immediately—but I never saw you again until this moment! A very shabby way to treat an old woman!" she concluded, half in jest and half in earnest.

Stephen was in no bantering mood and could hardly decide what to make of the kindly old soul's declaration, but he begged her pardon as the easiest way out of a puzzle not sufficiently interesting to inquire into then, afterward offering to escort her home to her hotel, since he could see no way of avoiding so doing.

The garrulous old dame accepted his escort

gladly, "pinning" him for an extra half hour, after reaching the Windsor, and only leaving him free when it was too late to return to his sister's cottage.

Then he slowly retraced his steps to the "States" where his rooms promised the seclusion his mood sought, but even this boon was denied him. As he entered the hotel the night clerk handed him a telegram.

"*L'homme propose mais*—" The telegram called him to New York, on the next train; all he had time for, before going, was to write a hurried note to his sister, explaining his sudden departure and begging her confidence in him, during his short absence.

VII.

A BOSTON GIRL'S WAYS.

BLANCHE Atherton pronounced Mrs. Marston's ball stupid. To admit the truth, she cared but little for balls in general, being of that order of young woman-hood which takes more kindly to long tramps than to short steps, be the music for the latter ever so enticing.

Perhaps her German education was responsible for her so-called "odd" tastes, for, though born in Boston, the most important years of her life had been passed in Dresden, with occasional stays in Southern Europe. Much of her experience had been among ultra-musicians and over-idealistic artists—her father having been devoted to them as patron and connoisseur—and her one gift and passion —music—had thus been fostered and cultivated, until it threatened to over-balance and warp her life by exciting a restless craving for what she had not been disciplined to attain.

Whatever lack of mental power she now suffered from, was probably more the result of unsystematic training, than natural inheritance: at all

events, Blanche Atherton was possessed of a gentle tender heart, which was incapable of meanness or arrogance, and an intuitive grasp of the sweetest side of human nature, which drew under her influence the unpopular as well as the favorites in her world. There was, also, about her, an element of puritan uprightness, easily traceable to the colonial governor, whose portrait looked down upon the various Atherton gatherings in their old Boston dining-room, which kept her at variance with many conventionalities, but true to the honest dictates of her proud spirit in all essentials.

She came to Saratoga this first season after a five years' absence, because the aunt, under whose care she had been since her father's death, could no more exist without the waters and treatment in summer, than she could without the Mount Vernon street home in Boston, and the many peculiar advantages growing out of that starting point in winter.

Blanche found it no sacrifice to adjust herself to the pleasant home-life of the Strong Institute—though a "Remedial Institute" in name and fact, the atmosphere was cheerful and the "invalids" hard to be discerned from the other guests. In the evenings there was always something interesting provided in the pleasant drawing-room which her

aunt, Mrs. Adams, was wont to estimate as "almost equal to our home advantages, you know," which, of course, was a great concession.

Some of her young friends who always summered at the large hotels on Broadway, considered it "a pity that poor Blanche was so far out of the way of everything!" but "poor Blanche" counted it as one of her "mercies" that she had found a refuge from the sort of girl who is never happy unless on exhibition, and she never lacked good company, even if she was deprived of omnipresent orchestral background.

When Richard Mannering Howard came into her horizon, first in London, then in Boston and now in Saratoga, she recognized in him qualities which she missed in most men of his age.

Her artistic sensibilities were alertly conscious of the superior timbre of his voice, and it required no particular intellectual effort to be soothed and exalted by the magic power of his finished and subtle art. Her aristocratic tendencies, too, were satisfied by his easy dignity and his repose of manner; more than this, she had not yet realized or considered.

She had not been able, thus far, to enjoy many of his readings, simply because their internal character was a little without the pale of her line of

thought and investigation, but the considerable heights which she had attained in the pursuit of her musical studies, made her zealous in the endeavor to broaden her capacities in all worthy ways, and spurred her on to the acceptance of those among other "opportunities" for culture.

Certain it is, that she never lacked "partners," however keenly she felt her limitations; but then, a young woman of family, fortune and amiability, never *does* lack companionship. Her enemies were those which envy and malice generated, and they accused her of being "too independent" in her associations and methods. They were shocked because she would travel alone, whenever she considered it necessary, and were equally horrified at her managing her own business affairs, and making her own plans, without the assistance of a maid or companion.

Some times an old friend would venture to quote some of these criticisms for Blanche's benefit, but she had a bright, cheery way of setting aside all interference and leaving herself as free as before.

Her happy temperament, furthermore, tended to the putting aside of unpleasant things, and she was quite willing to make allowances for the misunderstandings which arose between herself and those

who knew her as little as they knew the unique atmosphere in which she had grown up.

Dropping into Miss MacColl's little glove-shop, the morning after the ball, she found Mrs. Worthington revelling in the treasures of the place.

If there was one personal charm of which Blanche Atherton found the possession a constant satisfaction, it was her hand. Artists had moulded and painted it; admirers had expatiated upon its taper fingers, almond-shaped nails and exquisite coloring while her girl friends had, some times, so pointedly emphasized their admiration of those dainty members, as to suggest an undervaluation of her other personal attributes.

It followed, naturally, that—not being obliged to deny herself luxuries—she should indulge *ad infinitum* in the importations of the MacColl establishment, and it was counted one of her peculiarities that she lingered long over the selection and fit of her gloves, to the better enjoy the glimpses of human nature, which so popular a *rendezvous* offered.

It was "such fun" to see bashful boys buy gloves for "philopenas"; gay young husbands order "dozens" for their brides, and careful matrons make selections for their numerous daughters, to say nothing of the exaggerated carelessness of the

gilded youth of the resort, who strove to impress their importance upon all within hearing, by their lavish display of voice, swagger and extravagance.

Blanche was as generous to her friends as to herself, and many were the packages of gloves which delighted them on the slightest excuse for her making a demonstration of affection.

This morning she went into the shop especially to find Mrs. Worthington, whose presence there had been reported to her by a mutual friend.

"Look at me, Blanche, dear, and behold a martyr that is forced to make a dozen gloves last a whole year, and then fancy my feelings when I see such fortunate creatures as Mrs. Worthington and you buying them like postage stamps! Oh, dear! why was I not born rich as well as handsome!"

Blanche was regaled at this dramatic outburst on the corner of "Phila," street and Broadway, and she laughed merrily at the absurd pose struck by the speaker—a droll little maiden with unlimited family connection, whose name is too familiar in Saratoga to permit quoting—but she sighed as she turned away.

"What does money amount to, without parents, brothers or sisters," she thought.

"Oh, Blanche! not gone yet?" was Mrs. Worth-

ington's salutation, as she looked up from a quantity of twenty-four button "tans."

"I thought you were off this morning: some one said so."

"No. I shall stay through this month. I am glad to find you here for I want to get Mr. Howard's address. I have a friend in Washington who is very anxious to secure him for a reading. Some charitable affair; very 'swell,' and all that. I do not fancy Browning will answer, but a light, popular programme instead. Do you know where a letter will find him at once.

"He is at Elizabethtown now and expects to be there for another week. I should think he would like to go to Washington. Indeed, I believe Mrs. Habersham has arranged with him for a reading some time during the season, but where I do not know."

"All the more reason that I should make haste to secure an earlier date than hers.

"It can make no difference in the *eclat* of her reception, for all her guests are invited and sure to go; but it will be better for the 'charity' to secure his first appearance. There always are stupid people who will pay a good price only for a novelty—the sort of people who travel just to say they 'have been there.' Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I know that is true. I never was more surprised than to see the Kensington parlor crowded to hear Mr. Howard read Browning. I should have said Browning and Saratoga were as incompatible as ancient Greek and whipped cream. To tell you the unvarnished truth, my dear, Browning *is* too involved for the average mind, even in winter, and I do not mind confessing that I prefer lighter food, in August: but, apropos of our convictions, you remember that Mrs. Habersham's second morning, while even more crowded than the first, lacked just the element we speak of. Have you made your plans for the winter? Are we to see you in Boston?"

"Yes! I think so. I am hoping to stay at home a greater part of the winter. When do you go?"

"To-morrow: *there*! I shall not have to buy another glove for six months!"

And with this, Mrs. Worthington waved her hand triumphantly at a promiscuous pile of tissue paper and *gants de suede* with the air of one who has won a great victory.

With mutual and graceful farewells, the two parted, Mrs. Worthington passing out of the shop, leaving Blanche to speak to Arthur Graham, who had just come in.

"Good morning, Mr. Graham. Where were you

last evening? I quite missed you. You are generally so good in 'sitting it out' with me, just long enough to rest me thoroughly."

"Very kind of you to miss me, even as an 'alleviator,' Miss Atherton," he returned. "I intended being at the Marstons, but—couldn't manage it. Have you heard from Miss Langley to-day?"

Blanche's face gave quick signs of sympathy as she answered.

"No. I *hope* she is not seriously injured. Do you know how it happened? I have learned only that she was thrown from her cart."

"I believe the horse started while she had one foot on the cart step. They could not tell how serious the injuries might be, but when I called to inquire, in the afternoon, the maid said she was fevish and much bruised.

Miss Selden will suffer almost as much as Miss Langley. I never saw a more tender friendship between two girls."

An animated expression came over his face and he spoke with considerable warmth.

It occurred to Blanche that she had never seen him look so well before.

"He is in love with one of them," she thought, "and I wonder which."

A sigh followed the thought but nothing would

have forced her to admit, even to herself, that there was any connection between the two.

Arthur Graham, too, delivered himself of a sigh, which *was* an outcome of his thoughts; but this was not coincidental with Blanche's sigh, except in an external sense, for the only person in his mind was Jeanne Langley.

VIII.

MR. WESTLAND RETURNS.

THE afternoon light fell warmly across the lawn and Summer's parting breath dallied with the vine-leaves, now turning into scarlet and gold, as Margaret Selden leaned upon the back of the steamer-chair upon which Jeanne lay, like a delicate flower, contentedly receiving much cossetting.

"You are ever so much stronger to-day, dear; the doctor says you may drive to-morrow, and Mr. Graham begs to act as your 'Jehu.' Would you like it?"

"The drive? Yes, indeed. After three weeks imprisonment, it would be delicious to get out again, but, Madge, won't you drive me?"

"I'd love to, Jeanne, but how can you refuse Arthur Graham the pleasure? He has been so devoted to you all the while you have been ill. He has sent flowers every day, you know, and there was no end to the fruit, books, pictures and everything he could think of to amuse you."

Jeanne moved impatiently.

"It would have been the same, had *you* been the invalid, dear!" she answered almost pettishly. "Ah Madge," she added, with fore-finger raised in laughing menace, "I am not at all sure he would not much prefer your company to mine on the Avenue, to-morrow; there! *don't* look so confused. I will go with him, to satisfy you, though I wish I could show my gratitude in some other way."

After a moment's silence she asked,

"What has become of Mr. Westland?"

"Gone! I have not seen or heard of him since the day you were hurt. He called that afternoon and left some flowers and his regrets."

"Has Mrs. Marston closed her house yet?" was Jeanne's next venture.

"No. She does not go to town before November, I think. She has a house full of company."

Jeanne's eyes brightened as she turned her head slightly and played with a spray of leaves.

"I think she is lovely," she said, finally, "but, do you know, Madge, I do not feel quite at ease with her. She seems cordial too, but like a person that has not quite decided to give her entire confidence. Who is coming up the Avenue? Can you see?"

Margaret glanced in the direction indicated and frowned.

"Speak of the——! It is Mr. Westland, now. Shall I excuse you or will you see him here?" she asked.

Jeanne inspected herself and her surroundings. Somewhat tremulously readjusting her pretty laces and ribbons, she answered with almost over-much indifference, "Yes, I suppose I can see him, if you will please show him out,"—for their piazza was on the side of the cottage opening from the drawing-room and quite hidden from the front entrance.

"But you are tired already, Jeanne. Do not see him to-day!" urged Madge.

"It will do me good," answered Jeanne, with a show of revived spirits; so Margaret turned sharply and passed through the French window, to unwillingly execute her friend's commission.

She was spared many steps, for the guest stood before her, with outstretched hands and cordial greeting.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Westland; shall I take you to Miss Langley? She is on the piazza," was Margaret's frigid salutation. She did not reward his proffered hand with even a glance, nor, in fact, did she look in his direction at all. Holding back the curtains and making way for him she announced his presence to Jeanne and then went to a seat at the other end of the piazza.

Thus forbiddingly introduced and striving to crush back his resentment, Stephen Westland came into the presence of the object of his thoughts and longings; but, so trying and weary had those three weeks of absence been to him that there was not much room in his heart for anger, when his hungry eyes fell upon Jeanne's face and his hand clasped hers.

"My dear Miss Jeanne! It is happiness to see you again and to find you looking so much better than I had dared expect."

For a moment his self-control was dangerously threatened and his embarrassment was materially added to by the significant flush on Jeanne's cheeks. In spite of herself her eyes fell, but the woman's tongue was soon ready with a gay retort.

"What a very uncomplimentary speech, Mr. Westland, and how long it has taken you to avail yourself of your 'happiness!' I am nearly well again. Where have you been all the time?"

"In New York—watching beside a sick bed. Nothing less would have kept me away, Miss Jeanne."

Jeanne expressed the hope that no one dear to him was ill. "My brother has been in a very bad way but is mending, we hope. I brought him to my sister's last night." Then in a lower tone, he

added: "Miss Jeanne, are you strong enough to answer a serious question?"

"Yes. What is it?" she answered, half guessing what was coming.

"Can you tell me how I have offended Miss Selden?"

Jeanne laughed lightly. There was a new and strange gladness in the air, which made all troublous things seem meaningless.

"*Madge!* oh! she is a dear thing, but full of notions. Do not mind her. She will be all right when she knows you better. I am sure you have given her no cause for offence."

"Not to my knowledge, I assure you; but she refuses any friendly advances. What am I to do?"

"Leave her to me. Now tell me about yourself."

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Margaret had gone, now, from the piazza and they were entirely alone. The time had come for which Stephen had long waited and hoped. There was a deep light in his eyes and such a tremor in his limbs, as no danger could ever have sent through them. Closer and closer he bent over the girl's fair head, unchecked. The span betwixt heaven and earth had never seemed so slight to him before. "Jeanne," he whispered—"Jeanne." Her

eyes, all misty with a starry radiance, were uplifted for an instant, and then lowered in sweet confusion.

Still he was unrebuked. "Jeanne, dear one—let me tell you what my life is like: there is but one thing in it which gives it value, and that has grown and grown until it has pervaded my whole being and now glorifies every hour of my existence. Jeanne—I love you!"

His voice trembled and his hands clasped hers with almost painful force, while his eyes eagerly sought hers for a response. So she held him, for a moment, making no sign—and then strong in her maiden faith and joy, she lifted her face to his in almost child-like self-forgetfulness and softly whispered—"Thank God!'

IX.

FROM LIGHT TO DARKNESS.

A STEP on the gravel path recalled them to a recognition of passing events and then Margaret passed around the front of the house and joined them, placing a magnificent basket of roses, with a note, on the table near Jeanne's chair. Turning to inspect her charge she seemed suddenly struck with some unexpected and terrible thought. Controlling herself with visible effort she spoke calmly, though white to her lips. "Jeanne you look feverish and exhausted. Mr. Westland must pardon me if I beg him to excuse you, for to-day. I fear, as it is, you will suffer from over exertion." Then turning to him, with averted eyes, she added: "This is only the second time she has been down stairs and she is still far from strong."

Stephen rose quickly and mutely questioned Jeanne—was silenced by a shake of her head and a finger on her lip. Margaret saw nothing of this and only heard the gentle voice excusing her friend's

over-anxiety and bidding Mr. Westland *au revoir* "until to-morrow," when he must dine with them.

Receiving his cue from her, the happy but perplexed lover took his departure, carrying with him much food for blissful thoughts as well as a constantly increasing wonderment as to the cause of Miss Selden's attitude toward him.

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Jeanne was weary and half angry with Margaret, as well as disinclined to the announcement of her love for and engagement to the man so distasteful to her friend.

So, saying nothing of what had passed, she yielded to the suggestion that she should refresh herself by an hour's nap, and, accordingly, was left by Margaret, comfortably nestled down in the midst of a pile of cushions, upon a broad low lounge, in the furthest corner of the back drawing-room and protected from observation by a generous screen. Thus luxuriously settled, with no reason for shutting out her new happiness, she opened her violet eyes and gazed about her as if upon a new world. She had closed them to satisfy Margaret's affectionate solicitude—but they refused to stay shut—happy things! Raising her hands before her she regarded them, also, with tender curiosity. Slowly she turned them about and let the dim

light fall more fully upon them : then she laid each hand gently on either cheek and finally went through the process of softly kissing all her pretty fingers and pink palms.

"Just *here* and *here* and *there* he kissed you," she whispered to herself.

"You are nothing remarkable, but *he* says you are the lovliest hands in the world!"

So she murmured on, in the ecstasy of newly acknowledged love, until tired nature refused longer to be ignored and then she became lost to her immediate surroundings in a happy tangle of dreams with but one shadow in them, and that was the shadow of Margaret's stern face.

* * * * * * * * *

How long she slept she never knew. Her awakening was slow, indistinct and perplexing.

Low voices reached her ear, but it seemed a long time before she could separate her dreams from reality and so intangible and confused seemed everything, after the manner common to invalidism, that she made no movement to attract attention, until her ears and heart and whole being had comprehended a terrible statement, made with no knowledge of her close vicinity, nor of the deathly swoon into which it plunged her.

All she could ever tell about it was, that, with

the realization that she was awake and that the conversation being carried on was a reality and the voices those of her aunt, Mrs. Maxwell, and Mrs. Marston, came those words which first overwhelmed her with agony and then mercifully deprived her of consciousness.

They were spoken by Mrs. Marston and were,

"I thought everybody knew Stephen to be a married man. His wife is abroad."

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Agnes Marston had no idea of the effect of her words and for some time chatted on to her hostess.

That she had a serious intent, in thus frustrating what she had been forced to fear might prove a dangerous "amusement" of Stephen's was not at all apparent to Mrs. Maxwell and was not intended to be.

Her ostensible purpose in calling was to inquire after Jeanne's health, after which she had spoken of her brother Mark's arrival with Stephen.

In answering some joking remark of Mrs. Maxwell's about her two bachelor brothers she had deftly availed herself of the coveted opportunity to straighten matters, so far as possible, after which she took her leave, with a feeling of having done her duty to all concerned.

Mrs. Maxwell parted with her reluctantly, for

Agnes was very charming to every one, but most of all, to women. She had the rare faculty of inspiring them with confidence in themselves—that most subtle of all flattery.

"How beautiful she is! It always does me good to see her," mused the kindly hostess, as she took her way up to Jeanne's room after Mrs. Marston's departure.

Not finding Jeanne there, but meeting Margaret on the threshold, they both returned to the drawing-room to arouse the sleeper for dinner.

Great was their consternation to discover her, lying like a corpse, with rigid hands, parted lips and no sign of life apparent.

X.

JEANNE AND MARGARET.

MARGARET'S anxiety for her friend's life was secondary only to her fears for her happiness and—in this connection—her utter helplessness fairly frenzied her.

The doctor, after seeing Jeanne conveyed to her own room and revived from her obstinate swoon, strictly forbade her holding any conversation, treating the whole matter as a natural consequence of depleted strength.

But Margaret was far from satisfied with that theory.

There was a look of misery in Jeanne's face which nothing could make Margaret believe came from weakness alone.

She questioned Mrs. Maxwell but that good soul failed to make any thing clearer.

Somewhat relieved to be spared a conversation with Jeanne, but yet uneasy and thoroughly wretched, she wandered out on the same piazza which had been the scene of so much happiness that very afternoon.

The darkness was welcome and the need of restraint being removed, she threw herself into a low chair and gave vent to her excited and overwrought feelings. Clenching her hands she breathed quickly and heavily, until the internal and agonized workings of her mind finally forced her to her feet.

"I *must* tell her! there is no other way," she groaned. "He has no more heart than a stone and no more honor than a devil; but she will only cling to him all the closer for any accusations which are brought against him now, unless they are proved beyond doubt. Oh, my poor little Jeanne! Why *must* you be sacrificed to such a wretch?" and then, burying her hands and face in the cushions of the chair, she sobbed and wept as only so strong a woman can.

Finally, having exhausted herself, she lay back wearily, content to let the soft night air dissipate all signs of her unusual tears, for she knew she must soon return to Jeanne.

After a while, still lacking the courage to do what seemed her duty, she passed through the silent drawing-room, and, taking a light wrap from the hall-stand, threw it around her and passed out of the front door down the gravel walk, to a foot-

path which was screened from the street by a thick hedge, and afforded a retired promenade.

Up and down this she nervously paced for a considerable time.

Her dark hair and glowing eyes, and the crimson wrap, falling over her shoulders, made a striking picture in the clear moonlight.

"Poor Jeanne! Wretched me!" she murmured.

"How *can* I tell her? How can I see her suffer so!"

Her face was marked with sharp pain-lines, and each passing moment seemed to age her grievously. As she sped swiftly and nervously back and forth, a window blind was suddenly thrown open in Jeanne's room, and Mrs. Maxwell's voice called: "Margaret! are you there? I want you—*hurry!*"

Like an arrow she fled across the damp grass, up the steps, across the piazza and hall, and up the stairs, only pausing to catch her breath before opening the door which led into Jeanne's room.

As she stood there panting and listening for some encouraging sound, Mrs. Maxwell opened the door and shutting it behind her, gently drew Margaret a few steps away and said, "What *can* be the matter with her, Margaret? Her maid says she has not spoken or moved since the doctor left her. She takes no notice of me and will answer no questions.

Even my call to you did not seem to arouse her, as I hoped it would. Mr. Westland just sent her some flowers, and when Kate brought them to her, she shuddered and turned her face to the wall. Do you think she is out of her mind?"

Margaret was shocked and puzzled.

"I cannot understand it," she said. "Let me go to her," and pushing the door back, she crossed the dimly lighted room to her friend's bedside.

Kneeling by her, she put out her hand and softly touched the hot head, stroking the golden hair as it fell over the pillow.

"Jeanne, dear," she whispered, "does your head ache?"

Jeanne turned slowly, and, looking about the room, sighed wearily. Putting her arm about Margaret's neck she drew her head down and whispered:

"Madge, send everybody away. I want you alone."

Margaret answered, "Yes, dear, as quickly as I can." Rising, she said to Mrs. Maxwell, "I have often nursed Jeanne with these headache's—do not be worried. She will feel better after a night's rest. I think I can soothe her to sleep very soon."

Dismissing Kate, the maid, Margaret followed Mrs. Maxwell to the door, stopping to say, when

outside the room, "I think she is very nervous, but nothing more," and, bidding her good night, returned to Jeanne.

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"Madge, do weak people ever dream horrible things which seem absolutely real to them?" asked Jeanne, as Margaret sat down by her bed and tenderly bathed her fevered hands and head.

Under ordinary circumstances an affectionate and intelligent woman will tread closely upon the heels of falsehood, for the sake of quieting the agitation and sickly fancies of a beloved invalid.

Margaret's anxiety for Jeanne's future happiness, as well as her intense desire to understand the sudden and great change in the girl's face, voice and manner, influenced her answer.

She said to herself, "It may be I can turn her thoughts into the channel best suited to my story, by employing some dream-fancy for a beginning."

Sitting a little back of Jeanne's line of vision, and suspending her manipulations for the time being she said:

"I hardly know, dear. Why do you ask?"

"Because I *must* know, Madge," Jeanne cried, raising herself on her arm and dashing aside the slight covering which Margaret had thrown over her.

"If I have dreamed, I may dare to awaken; but if my ears really heard what my brain is repeating over and over,"—and the poor child fell back upon her pillow—"I want to *die*."

Margaret, more and more puzzled, put her head down close to Jeanne's, and held her trembling hands firmly, saying, "Tell me all about it, dearie, and let me help you if I can. What did you dream?"

"Was Mrs. Marston here this afternoon?" asked Jeanne suddenly.

"Not that I know of. I was in my room after I left you, until your aunt came up-stairs."

"Madge, *go!* go this moment, if you love me, and ask auntie if any one called this afternoon. Quick, Madge—go *now!*"

Jeanne looked so excited and strange that she really frightened Margaret, who lost no time in searching for Mrs. Maxwell and getting the desired information.

On her return she found Jeanne sitting up in bed, with both hands pressed against her temples, waiting breathlessly for her answer.

"Yes, Mrs. Marston was here for a few moments —Jeanne! What *is* the matter?" she cried, with her next breath, for, as if struck by lightning,

Jeanne had fallen prone upon her pillow in another deathly faint.

Margaret was too skilled a nurse to need any assistance in caring for the girl to whom she had been companion and friend for three happy years of mutual confidence and affection.

Deftly administering the proper remedies, she watched the symptoms of returning animation with much heaviness of heart.

Jeanne rallied very gradually, and it was painful to note how each accession of consciousness but increased the look of misery upon her young face.

Not a word did she speak for a long while.

Margaret kissed her gently and lingeringly, as only a woman can kiss a woman.

A flood of tears was her reward, and then came convulsive sobs, little pitiful gasps and heart-rending moans, as Jeanne cried, "Oh, Madge! hold me close, for my heart is broken! Oh, why did you nurse me back to life? Why could I not have died on that bright morning when I was so happy?"

So she cried on, at times incoherently, then more calmly, until out of it all Margaret began to hope for the peace which, of necessity, relieves such violent emotion.

Her hope was realized, for at length Jeanne became more calm.

"How selfish I am, dearest," she said, abruptly withdrawing herself from the now aching arms of her faithful friend, and turning toward her on her pillows.

"You are better now, Jeanne," said Margaret, trying to speak in a matter-of-course tone.

Preparing a quieting potion, she handed it to Jeanne, who, much to her relief, accepted it, while in an altered but still unnatural tone she said, "Yes, I am stronger now, and you must listen to me and then tell me what to do. I am going to speak very frankly, Madge, and I want you to give me your fullest sympathy and help. It has caused me much pain to see the great dislike you have shown toward Mr. Westland, ever since you first met him. I never could understand it. It is the only injustice I have ever known in you. This afternoon while I was half asleep and half awake, in the drawing-room, Mrs. Marston told Auntie—that—that he was—a—married man." Here Jeanne's voice failed her for a moment, but after a little she went on: "I was weak and so I suppose I fainted, for, only one little hour before, he had told me he loved me."

There was another moment of silence, but this time it was not a tearful silence. Quite the opposite. To Margaret's utter amazement, a happy

smile came upon the delicate face and a new strength seemed suddenly to animate the whole figure, as in ringing tones she added, "And, Madge, I know he does love me and that I love him as well. Come what may, *that* cannot be changed!"

Looking fully into Margaret's face, she stopped short—shocked at the expression of indignant wonderment she saw there.

For a moment both were silent. Then Margaret withdrew from the bed, slowly and painfully; stiffened by her long continuance in one position, it may be—but to Jeanne it seemed more like a sudden coldness of heart.

At last Jeanne found voice to cry, "Madge, what is it? *You* do not believe that wicked story? Surely you cannot think my Stephen such a villain! But you *never* liked him and so you were never just to him."

Jeanne became as cold and dignified now as she would have been to an utter stranger. She arranged her disordered clothing, pushed back her hair, calmly adjusted her pillows and made all the necessary preparations for sleep without a glance at Margaret, who seemed lost in thought and wholly unmindful of the present.

But Jeanne's strength of action was not quite equal to her determination. At last looking at her

friend she said, "I think I am more to blame than you are, Madge. It is not strange that you should be ready to believe evil of Stephen, never having liked him; especially when I gave you the right to believe that *I* doubted him. Oh, Madge! how *could* I ever have been so false to him—even for one moment! You have done me good, for you have brought me to my senses." Here Jeanne put out her hand, affectionately, but Madge took no notice of it. Undismayed, Jeanne went on.

"I would not believe the whole united world against my beloved's honor," she declared. "I am ashamed to think that any degree of physical weakness could have made me so untrue to him, even in thought."

Here she suddenly looked around at the table at the head of the bed, and, seizing the roses which Stephen had sent her and from which she had turned with horror, a short time before, she buried her face in their fragrant beauty and kissed them in her penitence.

This, at last aroused Margaret. She leaned forward and intently studied the flushed face.

"Jeanne, my darling, you are worn out and must rest," she said. "Let me say good-night and to-morrow, dear, I will tell you all you have so often asked me about and which I have so often with-

held, concerning my past life. God bless you, Jeanne."

With these words she passed quietly from Jeanne's side and a moment later had shut herself up in her own room.

XI.

MARGARET AND STEPHEN.

WITH only that door between them, the early hours of the following day dawned upon this true but constrained friendship.

In the "red room," as it was called, Margaret lay with wide open eyes, dreading the approach of the moment that must open her lips and—Heavens! what might not her words bring to that sensitive and loving heart!

Again and again she reviewed the situation, vainly striving to discover some way of averting the misery which she saw hanging over Jeanne. It was wholly of Jeanne and not at all of herself, that she now thought.

She was quite past considering the others who were involved in the wretched affair, herself included. Without a qualm of conscience, would she have consigned all the Westlands in creation to endless perdition—had the means of so doing been in her hands—if it would have ended Jeanne's troubles and made her her sunshiny self once more.

Ever since a certain bleak March day, three years before, when she first looked upon Jeanne Langley, in her black dress—an orphan, like herself—she had dearly loved her.

Her duties as companion at once became her greatest happiness and the depth of her loyal nature quickly unfolded, in the atmosphere of affectionate consideration with which Jeanne had delighted to environ her. Their lives had thus run on together, in smooth and pleasant grooves, until Jeanne's critical and fashionable world no longer drew any line of distinction between Miss Langley, the heiress, and Miss Selden, her dearest friend.

And now—Margaret's love must choose between speaking the words that might kill her darling, or maintaining silence and so permitting disgrace to touch her poor life, innocent though she would be.

No! there was no escape; and Margaret prayed almost frantically for the strength to do her duty, and for Jeanne, that she might be able to bear her heavy burden and out-live its bitterness.

Jeanne, throughout that night, lay quietly in her pretty little French bed, with Stephen's roses pressed upon her bosom, rising and falling, with her every breath. Her sleep, however, was fitful and broken—her dreams half sad and half glad. Sleeping or waking her lacerated spirit found measureless com-

fort in the incessant iteration of the consoling words:

"Stephen loves me, and he will explain all."

Her chief cause of sadness, now, lay in her having given credence, however briefly, to what she had heard Mrs. Marston say. She felt that she had been wickedly disloyal, in so doing, and the qualms of self reproach occasioned her exquisite pain. It also distressed her deeply, to see Margaret, whom she loved next to Stephen, regard him with such abhorrence.

As often as she recalled his grieved wonderment, as to the cause of this aversion, she felt sure that Margaret's heart would have been won over to his cause, had she witnessed it.

One consequence of her recent intense excitement, was a lack of capability to realize, much of the time, whether she was actually thinking or lost in the mazes of a fevered dream.

Sometimes Stephen's loving tones seemed filling the air with music. She would fancy that his hands were holding her fast, as she found herself suspended over depths of unfathomable darkness, whence Mrs. Marston's laughing voice came, always repeating those awful words,—"Stephen is married—Stephen is married." Then again, Margaret's face glared at her, with a horrible scorn upon it.

But toward morning, she was nearer a normal state, and then, her dreams were of joy and gladness; roses and perfume—safety and—Stephen!

As the hour of eight was chimed from the hall clock, Margaret stole in and looked at Jeanne, who then lay curled up among her pillows, her heavy lashes sweeping her cheeks, her lips curled in a half pout, as if in some pretty resentment, while her hands still clung to Stephen's roses.

"Such a child! and yet so strong in her confidence and love. How I wish she might never know a sorrow," sighed Margaret, as she noiselessly pushed a screen between the bed and morning light, which was now falling through the eastern window, after which she left Jeanne to her dreams.

The household were not likely to assemble around the breakfast table for another hour, as Mrs. Maxwell was fond of her morning nap and Mr. Maxwell was off on a trip to the city. Only the servants disturbed the absolute quiet of the crisp bright morning.

Margaret, wretched and utterly unrefreshed by her night of wakeful and disturbed tossings, craved the tonic of nature's own making, and, donning hat and wrap, quietly passed out of the side door, down the Avenue, on to the road leading toward Woodlawn Park.

Every thing looked so bright and cheerful that she felt better and stronger and quickening her pace, soon found herself among the well-kept winding paths of the park, catching exquisite glimpses of hill and vale through the numerous leafy openings, and drinking in the clear air and brilliant beauty of the gorgeous landscape, now royal with autumnal colorings. Cold and irresponsive, indeed, must have been the heart that clung to impassiveness on such a morning and in the midst of such surroundings.

Her color, always deep and abundant, was richly increased by the frosty air and her brisk exercise.

Her whole figure suggested strength, equipoise, energy and dignity and she sped along, independent of any intention or purpose.

With the economy of a mind disciplined to meeting great issues with cool courage, she now forced herself to put aside the questions and worries of the past, present and future, recognizing the necessity of gaining all possible good from the hour's respite.

Turning into one of the many woody paths, she found herself suddenly committed, as it were, to a circling, down-hill grade which lost itself in successive curves.

Yielding to the momentum, and glad of the freedom from observation, she permitted her walking

to merge into running—until, breathless and flushed, she reached the bottom of the hill—glad to sink upon a rustic bench which was conveniently awaiting her.

All about her the solitude was unbroken except for the rattling of a squirrel here and there.

The Hilton cottages were just above her and their roofs were visible through the trees, but there was nothing else in sight except the soothing architecture of Nature.

Her flying feet had scattered countless beds of gold and crimson leaves from her way, and their rustle still vibrated in her ears—then it suddenly struck her that this was strangely prolonged. "Surely they cannot be so long in fluttering into place," she thought. "Where does all that sound come from?" Swish! Swash! like the trailing of a heavy silk over a marble floor, went the leaves, and the sound increased in volume. Some one was coming.

Margaret, half indifferent, half curious, looked around.

Handsome as an Apollo (even she was forced to admit it) unconscious as a statue—with head thrown back and his hands behind him, carelessly trailing his walking stick, which kept the carpet of autumn leaves in such a murmur of resentment, came

Stephen Westland. Not yet aware of her presence, he looked as if his thoughts were above any earthly thing, so utterly glad was his face, so joyous his step.

Margaret started to her feet, thereby attracting his notice; but she turned away from him with the intention of retreating and was only forced by her own self-respect to turn again in response to his greeting.

"Where on earth did *you* come from, so early in the morning, Miss Selden?" he cried, gayly, touching his hat and "presenting arms" in droll affectation of military salute.

Margaret simply congealed. "I thought I was quite alone, Mr. Westland," she answered. "I am afraid it is later than I supposed it to be." With a very slight inclination of the head, she made a movement as if to pass him; but Mr. Westland evidently thought that this was a very good time and place, to come to an understanding with this unaccountably offensive young woman. Accordingly, he stepped in front of her and said, with great dignity and courtesy of tone and manner:

"Miss Selden; may I not beg one moment of your time? Will you kindly tell me in what way I have been so unfortunate as to offend you?"

Margaret's eyes flashed. She closed her hands

tightly, making a swift mental estimate of what would be her best course under present circumstances. Deciding the question quickly, she paused—looking the protest she felt at thus being detained against her will.

He stood before her—quiet and grave—awaiting her answer. A less prejudiced person would have felt the respect-inspiring influence of his frank, open face and well-bred bearing. Not Margaret—like the cut of a sword came the words.

"How *dare* you ask me such a question? Do you think I am as base and heartless as yourself? Do you suppose I have ever dreamed that even *your* audacity and villainy would carry you to such a length as to insult Miss Langley with words of love?" she demanded fiercely. "Do you expect me to hold my peace and see her sweet life *ruined?*"

The excited girl seemed to add inches to her stature, as she towered in her wrath before the amazed man—for he was amazed—and nothing more. His face gave no evidence of anything but extreme bewilderment.

"Miss Selden," he said, in the same quiet tone—"You are in such unmistakable earnest that I cannot doubt your full faith in whatever you base your very strong adjectives upon; but, in justice to myself, I must insist upon an explanation, for I am

entirely in the dark. By what right do you call me *villain*?"

Margaret had moved away a step, but she turned back again at this demand.

"By the right of my knowledge of your past unworthiness!" she exclaimed.

"By the right of my love for Jeanne Langley:

"By the right of my pity for that long-forsaken girl you so shamefully wronged—and by the right of my *supreme contempt for you!*"

"What girl?" sharply demanded Stephen, as Margaret again turned from him.

She wheeled about, and, looking all her wrath and indignation, answered sternly, "*Your wife!*"

He started as if struck.

"What do you know about her?" he asked with amazed inflection.

"*Every thing*," was the answer. "Shall I denounce you to Miss Langley, as a married man, or will you leave us to such peace as time is said to bring to deceived and disappointed women, and so let silence cover the past and obliterate its shame?"

Margaret's tone was now changed to one of entreaty. She stretched out both hands, even touching Stephen's arm in her earnestness.

"Why will you not do this, Mr. Westland?" she pleaded, brokenly.

"Poor Jeanne is so delicate and so easily overcome by excitement. Why will you not leave town at once and write to her that you have reconsidered your feelings and judge it kindness to her to leave her free. Will you not? Truly enough, that will nearly kill her, for she loves you with her whole heart; but better that than for her to know the truth. Oh! promise me, now, to go at once!" And she fairly hung on his arm in the agony of desire to accomplish her end.

Stephen Westland, more and more puzzled and now deeply distressed, took both her hands in his own and said;

"I will go within an hour if you can convince me that it is necessary for Jeanne's happiness, but *why* should my painful past unfit me for the duties and the unutterable happiness of making Jeanne's life as bright and happy as she and I *both* believe I *can* make it."

Margaret snatched away her hands and scornfully drew back from any possible contact with him.

"*Why*, when you are a *married man!* how *dare* you!"

"*But*," he interrupted, "*my poor wife has been dead for two years*, and so tell me, pray, why she need cloud Jeanne's life, if we marry?"

Margaret now seemed absolutely turned to stone:

every trace of softness and sympathy faded out of her face and when she next spoke, her voice was harsh and discordant.

"Mr. Westland, all hope is dead within me now. Understand, however, that you cannot deceive me, nor shall you deceive my poor Jeanne. I have but little doubt that it will kill her to learn the truth but there are worse things to bear than death: she shall never be your dupe! Your wife is *not* dead. *I saw her less than six months ago!*" and turning from him for the last time, she left him standing dazed and speechless, and passed swiftly out of sight.

XII.

JEANNE AT HOME.

LOOKING neither to the right nor to the left —headless of nature's lovliness on all sides and mindful only of its abnormal atrocity, as revealed in the man she had just left stareing after her—sped Margaret, reaching home and the refuge of her own room, unnoticed and unchallenged.

Everything was in order. The pretty little clock, which Jeanne had given her the week before, ticked as serenely as though marking the pulsation of only light and happy hearts.

The special luxury, a low lounge, drawn up before the window, with its ample cushions, looked invitingly restful; but it was not to indulge in any indolent reveries that she now threw herself upon it. Tears were forbidden her, but her whole frame trembled with suppressed emotion. For a single moment she had indulged the hope that Stephen Westland might be induced to go away, and so spare Jeanne the misery of knowing to the full the extent of his baseness. "But what a fool I was to

put any confidence in such a man;" she now cried to herself.

"Do I not know--have I not known for years, his heartlessness and his intense selfishness. Poor Jeanne! poor me! poor everybody that has to depend upon so unstable and self-worshiping a nature!"

The breakfast bell broke in upon her painful self-communing. Then there was a tap at the door and Jeanne's face peeped in, quickly followed by her charming person daintily attired in a favorite combination of softest tinted pink and blue crèpe with old and rare lace about her white throat and hands. A vision of tender and propitiating lovliness, indeed.

"Are you ill, Madge," she cried, noting the posture and the unsmiling welcome, for the suddenness of her coming, had prevented the change in her outward appearance which Margaret intended making.

Rising and forcing a poor substitute for her usual hearty greeting, she glanced at herself, as she passed her dressing table and exclaimed, "No wonder you ask! what a fright I am: I believe I walked too far and am a little tired."

They went down stairs side by side, Jeanne hanging on Margaret's arm, for this was her first appearance at the breakfast table since her accident

—the lack of necessity, rather than any more serious reason, having excused her from giving up her pet luxury—breakfast in her own room.

Mrs. Maxwell greeted Jeanne with rejoicing.

"My love," she said, "you really frightened me nearly out of my wits, yesterday. I was afraid you were going to have some horrible fever or something. But the doctor said it was only weakness. Margaret must see that you are more careful today. Why Margaret! you look worse than Jeanne, this morning. What *is* the matter? Have you caught her headache?"

"Perhaps," replied Margaret, accepting that as the easiest way of answering her kind question, and proceeding at once to make herself useful by many little services which she usually performed; relieving Mrs. Maxwell of pouring the coffee and Jeanne of preparing her beefsteak and eggs, as well as herself of the necessity of much eating.

While they discussed different subjects of mutual interest, the door bell rang and a servant brought a note to Jeanne, with a knot of spicy roses of the creamy whiteness just matching her lace.

"How very lovely," she said, with such lack of enthusiasm as to make her words sound mechanical and parrot-like.

Mr. Graham had averaged three bouquets a week, lately, and had reaped but slight reward from his

devotion. Supposing this offering to be from him, Jeanne laid the note down by her plate without opening it, until accidentally glancing at the superscription, her manner quickly changed and the slighted missive became the object of her closest inspection.

The hand writing was vastly different from Mr. Graham's too feminine chirography, and its chief virtue hardly seemed to be legibility, for it took Jeanne many minutes to digest its contents which were only:

"MY DEAREST—May I follow my roses very soon? If not, please send me a message and tell me the first moment I may go to you.

Yours always,
STEPHEN."

Jeanue was a bit disappointed that her first note from her lover should be so brief—but he was coming! What did any thing else matter!

She made no explanation to her companions. There was nothing unusual in notes and flowers coming to her, or to Margaret either, for that matter. Mrs. Maxwell asked, carelessly, "Is Mr. Graham going to stay much longer?"—but she hardly waited for an answer before introducing a more vital subject.

Margaret said nothing, but noted the change in

Jeanne's face, the unusual care she took of the note, and the fact that the knot of roses was carefully conveyed to that portion of her gown which was nearest to her heart, where it was fastened securely.

It was after ten now, and Margaret asked Jeanne what plans she had made for the morning.

"None, dear," was the prompt reply. "You know I have loathed 'plans' ever since that dreadful Mrs. Baxter was here and made my life such a burden with her 'systems of education,' 'systems of philanthropy' and various other 'systems' for making herself an intolerable nuisance, generally. Don't think of me at all, but act your own sweet will, Madge, dear. I am hopelessly lazy and have just the book to dream over, with no danger of fatigue or lack of amusement."—And with this, Jeanne waved a neat little edition of Prof. Sheppard's "Saratoga Chips" before Margaret's face, as she disappeared into the morning room, where the combined efforts of sunlight and an open wood fire, afforded just the atmosphere most conducive to thorough comfort.

Margaret immediately set herself about her morning duties and Mrs. Maxwell only lingered to give her orders for the day to Rachael, the waitress, saying as she left the room, "Do not wait luncheon for me. I may have to stay at the 'Home of the Good Shepherd,' until late."

XIII.

STEPHEN'S RACE WITH HIS FEARS.

STEPHEN WESTLAND watched Margaret out of sight and then sat down upon the bench from which his coming had driven her, and struggled to arrange his dazed ideas sufficiently to understand her last words.

"I saw her less than six months ago."

Who could she have seen, six months ago? Not *Elsie;* the woman who had deserted his heart and his home, and who had for two years slept under the shadow of an old French cathedral, among the last scenes of her strange, foreign life.

He recalled the horror of Margaret's tone and the scorn written on her every feature, as she had spoken those words of denunciation.

"*She* believes it, but how can I convince her she is mistaken," he muttered. He went back, mentally, to the day when he had seen that death notice in a New York paper and wondered where the friend could be found who had then made inquiries for him. On returning from abroad, this friend had assured him that he had seen the erring

wife's grave, of which he had even brought a photograph, which was taken especially for him.

Weighing all these things in his mind, and, weighing also the truthfulness and sincerity of Margaret's character, for the first time a dreadful doubt slowly insinuated itself into his mind. What if she still lived—despite the notice and the identified grave!

Could her alleged death have been a trick of vengeance, in retaliation for his refusal to be dragged into a divorce court? Or had this evil woman thus endeavored to rid herself of the possibility of discovery.

As he admitted these frightful possibilities, he suddenly felt himself growing weak and faint-hearted. In those few moments, he first realized how dreadful his real position might be and his reason nearly forsook him, and it was no wonder that even his strong manhood should give way: his honor was assailed—his happiness was threatened and all that he valued in life was on the verge of possible wreck;—with an outcry of agony he plunged, literally, into the heart of the woodland maze and rushed along, as wretchedly blind to his surroundings as Margaret had been when she fled from him, in the opposite direction.

Disciplined by past sorrow and suffering, his im-

pulsive nature had learned self-control in goodly measure; but now his chief feeling was for others, and no amount of former training or misery-evolved fortitude was likely to help him much, for the time being.

On and still on his head-long pace carried him, until, by the time his back was turned on Glen Mitchell his thoughts were, at least, far clearer.

"I have nothing to be ashamed of, however matters may stand," he ruminated. "If Jeanne loves me, she has a right to know and if she is the woman I believe she is, this trouble will bring out all her womanly wisdom and tact clearly. My first duty is to tell her all.

"If I have been deceived and that woman still lives, Jeanne shall decide whether the law shall free me and unite us or whether we are to await Heaven's time."

The more his mind dwelt on this phase of the matter, the calmer he became. Such is the consolation of a clear conscience!

"The truth must prevail and neither Jeanne nor I will hide ourselves from our duty—" he cried, speaking out to himself in exultant tones, as he once more recognized the blueness of the sky and the freshness of the air.

All hopelessness and helplessness suddenly slipt

away and he was now buoyant with a courage that was born of his own moral rectitude and his faith in Jeanne.

In spite of the intense strain and excitement through which he had passed, his splendid health and the relief which came of having decided upon his next step, served in good stead in his struggle to regain his self-possession.

The late breakfast hour at Mrs. Marston's enabled him to join the family circle in proper and ample time, as well as to write the note to Jeanne and dispatch it to her, with the flowers.

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Mr. and Mrs. Marston quite flattered themselves upon possessing an exceptional *coterie* of friends, and there were many good reasons for this. Their house combined comfort and elegance, every part being perfect in itself and every guest sure of a cordial welcome to its hospitality, whether it was claimed for an hour or a month.

Gilbert Marston cared but little for society outside his own walls. In fact his chief delight was in a "box" on the lake shore where, with his favorite dogs and books and a man or two, he was wont to beguile many a pleasant hour.

The habits of bachelor life were difficult to throw off, since he had married somewhat late in life, and

even the company of his beautiful wife failed, at times, to quiet his restless craving for the woods and the water to which before meeting her, he had always turned for enjoyment.

Agnes was too clever a woman to make any protest when she recognized the symptoms of an approaching "trip to the wilds," as she collectively designated her husband's wanderings—only she always took good care to make all his home comings bright and gladsome.

The North Broadway neighborhood had a charm of its own, somewhat unique and altogether delightful, made up as it was of families who generally spend at least six months in Saratoga and of another goodly number who call no other place home.

These fortunate folk have wealth, taste and tact, in goodly measure, with no morbid lack or superfluity of family pride to stand in the way of the giving of their best to the world at large.

Probably there is no place in the world where individual worth goes so far in securing social recognition as in Saratoga.

So long as a man or a woman inspires confidence and respect and brings to the "Great Spa" their personal, mental or monied possessions, they will be sure of a cordial reception and following; but wealth alone secures less homage here than any of

life's other gifts, while even a "pedigree" has to yield to the supremacy of brilliant talents and a good address.

Agnes Marston's great ambition was to make her house a centre for artistic and intellectual lights. Exceptionally graceful and charming herself, she laid no claim to any particular gift except that of gathering together and assimilating clever people, but of that she made a fine art. Her "At Homes" were always crowded, her dinners were the delight of those fortunate enough to attend them, and there seemed no limit to her ingenuity in varying her methods of entertainment.

An appreciative friend and a near neighbor voiced this well by declaring that "Mrs. Marston should be in the 'White House'!"

Just now her family circle was limited to two or three pretty "Trojan" girls, as many men—Gilbert's cronies—and her two brothers.

Mark Westland lacked his brother's vigor as well as his happy temperament. This was his first visit to Saratoga, several of his recent years having been passed on the continent, and he now found himself a *blasé* man of the world, but little at home in the sweet wholesome atmosphere of the domestic circle and uncommonly at odds with everything and everybody.

Much of this—in his own mind *all* of it—was due to the invalided condition which had brought him to his sister's home and nursing and he hardly knew whether the most of this unrest was mental or physical.

To live any length of time in a country place, with no clubs, theatres, crowds or excitement, seemed to him the least desirable of many undesirable experiences, but, hardly feeling equal to anything else for the time being and realizing the absolute necessity of replenishing his exhausted system, he had lost no time in absorbing the maximum of luxury and self-indulgence afforded in his sister's well-ordered establishment, careless alike of the pleasures or opinions of others.

Even Agnes' natural affection and sisterly sense of duty were severely strained to the limits of forbearance by his extreme selfishness, and, in the secret depths of her heart, she wondered at the contrast between her two brothers.

As Stephen left the breakfast room, that memorable morning, he said to Mark: "Brace up, my boy, and take one of the girls for a good long ride this morning. It will put new life in you and my horse will show you more of Saratoga, than the combined efforts of Agnes and all the turnouts can in a week."

Which piece of brotherly impertinence, received prompt and vigorous retribution from Agnes, in the form of a plump, sofa cushion, fired with exceptional accuracy of aim and only avoided by Stephen by a masterly dodge.

He thrust his head in at the door, however, long enough to suggest his sister's fitness for a membership in the "Rifle Club," and then disappeared down the street.

As great as he felt the issues of the approaching interview must be, in any case, Stephen Westland could not overcome the steadfast gladness which sustained his soul and made him feel equal to anything.

He had coped with evil in beguiling and heart-breaking guise; had sacrificed his first and freshest manhood to a miserable illusion, and had tasted more than the bitterness of death in being forced to acknowledge this to his own heart. Then came years of regret, self abeyance, and general scepticism. But his nature was too large and noble to be dwarfed by misfortune. Slowly but surely out of the faith, which he had never lost, in divine goodness and omnipotence he regained his moral balance and tone as well as his original ideal of womanliness, though the latter seemed, for so long, denied his possession.

Little by little, Jeanne Langley had become the sweet living embodiment of that long-cherished ideal. He knew her to be that fairest work of the Creator—a Christian gentlewoman—full of frank and delicate impulses, and as honest in thought as she was in word and deed.

That she loved him, made the future a new world to them both. That he could trust her to act from principle, was the comfort of his heart and a consideration almost strong enough to obliterate all the possible pain before them.

On he went, by the "Gables" from whence a rich penetrating voice brought to him the refrain of a favorite song; past the former home of the lately deceased millionaire banker, whose name was synonomous with philanthropy and generosity; past the Mannering's fascinating "Do-drop-in" cottage and a group of young people who were just starting out for a tramp and loudly clamored for his company and still on, past the various temptations presented to him on all sides to stay his steps, until Mrs. Maxwell's spacious grounds and handsome house were reached.

It so happened that Jeanne saw him coming. In fact, he caught her in the very act of holding back the curtain draperies, the better to feast her eyes upon him.

It followed, naturally enough, that she ran to

admit him without any aid of the official guardians of the portals, and it also followed, quite as naturally, that the morning room became the scene of a very pretty and extremely affectionate *tableau vivant* which brought to Jeanne's heart the double bliss of gratification and reparation, though it did cost Stephen a fleeting doubt as to his duty, in the face and eyes of all things which were to be considered.

He certainly would have deserved a place among the saints and martrys, if he had repulsed such exquisite lovliness, granting it to have been his duty.

The more fully he realized her purity of character, which scorned reserve; her child-like simplicity, which unquestioningly accepted his love and gave full confidence in return, the more his heart shrank from disturbing this perfect state of mutual happiness with ny discussion of ugly possibilities, however imperative they might seem to be.

The lounge being especially roomy, Stephen had prevailed upon Jeanne to assume her customary position, as an invalid, in one of its corners, while, in place of the very comfortable but now quite superfluous cushions, his arm did duty—her pretty head reposing on his shoulder.

"Dear love, let us be happy for a few moments,"

he whispered, kissing her soft cheek and white forehead; and Jeanne yielded contentedly to his caress.

Having had scores of would-be lovers, no one of whom had ever dared so much as touch her hand with a lover's right, she now joyously accepted the endearments of the man who had won her heart.

There was a feeling of self rebuke in her sensitive soul, that Stephen should love her so much when she had, only the night before, cherished such doubts of him, and she questioned the duty of immediately telling him the whole story. All that restrained her, was the fear of seeming to force him into a revelation of his past history which, for some good and sufficient reason, he was not ready to make. Her love had wiped out even curiosity. She was certain, in her own mind, of his rectitude and quite willing to await his choice of time for any explanations that he should consider necessary; still, it would have been a relief to her own feelings to have acknowledged what she considered her lack of faith. Thus she pondered, while Stephen held her close and braced himself for what he knew he must say—and a pretty picture they made, there in the morning light.

XIV.

THE MAN IN THE DOORWAY.

"JEANNE, sweet one!-do you love me enough to trust me entirely?" said Stephen, after some minutes of silent joy—thinking it time, now, to prepare the way for his story.

Jeanne felt the question a stab; a punishment for her recent fault. She trembled and raised her tearful eyes to him.

"Stephen," she faltered, "I never again will doubt you."

"*Again!* have you already doubted me?" he cried, drawing her face more fully into the light; then, startled at the look of shame and remorse he saw upon it, he said: "My dear love, I am much older than you; my life has been crowned with suffering and the chief cause of it all has been deception."

"I will tell you everything that can affect or interest you, in connection with my past life, without reserve, and you will grant me the same confidence. Shall it not be so, Jeanne?"

Jeanne gathered her courage for a full confession.

Her one wish at this moment was to unburden her heart of its uttermost fault. Every word that Stephen so tenderly and trustingly spoke, proved to her anew his worth, and, at the same time, magnified her own short comings.

She conceived herself too much trusted and felt she must at once make Stephen acquainted with the temporary misgivings which so burdened her conscience.

Moving a little away from him, the better to control herself, she said ;

"Stephen, you know I had much to shake my nerves lately and perhaps I am not altogether responsible for foolish whims and fancies,"—and then she told him of her slow awakening in the corner of the dimly lighted drawing-room, of his sister's words and of their effect upon her.

She enlarged upon Margaret's sympathy; touched lightly upon her friend's antagonism to him ; confessed her own speedy recovery of her "senses" and her unqualified confidence in him now. And then, with tender gestures and loving words, she begged his forgivenness and his future faith in her loyalty.

He had hard work to keep from interrupting her continually, she was so touchingly charming and magnanimous in her self forgetfulness.

When she stopped speaking he took her hands and kissed them reverently. Then putting them on her lap he arose and stood before her.

"Jeanne," he answered, gravely, "I will tell you my story now and then you can judge me from your own best wisdom and decide what is right for us both."

Up and down the bright room he slowly paced for a moment, Jeanne watching him patiently with no fear in her heart.

At last he came to her again, arranged her cushions carefully and—putting himself on probation—sat down near enough to touch her occasionally, but leaving a bit of unoccupied space on the lounge between them, subject to her future bestowal.

Calmly and frankly he told her of his boyish days and of his mother. Then he spoke of Elsie's introduction into the family circle—of her beauty, talents and powers of fascination, passing swiftly on to their days of romance and their marriage.

When he reached this point, Jeanne hid her face in her hands and trembled so violently that Stephen in great alarm, knelt before her and asked her if he should stop; but she controlled herself, and, stroking his face, answered, "No, dear! tell me all."

After that he did not stop until she had been told every thing, even to the fear which had been inspired by Margaret's words to him, that morning.

She seemed to forget herself in her sympathy for him and it nearly broke his heart to see how white and worn her face had grown, in her intense interest in his tragic story.

"Jeanne, Jeanne! my sweet brave love! if you say so, I will go and leave you to forget all this," he cried, in his unselfishness.

Her face lit up with a wan little smile.

"Do not worry about me, Stephen, but let us think what is right and best for us to do."

Pulling him down by her, on the lounge a moment, she whispered, "Kiss me once more, Stephen," —There was a silence after which Jeanne drew herself a little away from him and said,

"Let us call Madge and ask her to tell us, when and where she saw—her."

Ringing the bell she sent the maid for Margaret and rested wearily on her cushion while she waited. The strain was beginning to tell on her and her heart, while brave, and holding no thought of blame against Stephen, sank in view of the possibilities before them both.

Margaret, in answer to her summons entered the

room so gently that she stood by Jeanne's side before she was aware of her presence.

"Do you need me, Jeanne?" she asked.

The tone was stern and her look unsmiling. She dared not indulge in any tenderness toward the girl she felt she must soon wound so terribly.

She took it for granted that the cause of all this misery had been working upon Jeanne's credulity and so instantly nerved herself to meet the necessity of opening Jeanne's eyes to Stephen's true character—fancying that the time had now come.

Jeanne's next words, however, almost paralyzed her. "Sit down Madge, please, and tell us all you know about—about Mrs. Westland. It is necessary that we should have all the information possible, that we may act justly to her and ourselves."

Is this calm, firm, reasonable woman her Jeanne? —Margaret wondered. What new cunning, she asked herself, had been brought to bear upon Jeanne by this prince of deceit, that he had forestalled the disclosure of his baseness and the disgrace of his old life, and in such a way as to still retain his right to stand in the presence of this wronged girl!—And where were the symptoms of wild and overwhelming misery, which she had been preparing herself to meet, console, and as far as possible, mitigate, with sympathy?

As she stood in speechless amazement and silence, Stephen added his wish to Jeanne's that she should tell "everything."

Then, since his manner was so sincere, she suddenly decided that the man was *mad*, and her heart softened toward him a little, but before she could decide just what to do and while she was still half doubting her own senses, a door, which was facing her, but which was directly behind her companions, opened and her bewildered gaze fell upon a second man, to all appearance so exactly the facsimile of Stephen Westland that the door-way might have been a mirror with Stephen facing it.

Margaret's start and expression of amazement, attracted the attention of both Jeanne and Stephen and the latter, turning, saw his brother Mark hesitating on the threshold, with his eyes so riveted upon Margaret, that no one else in the room made the slightest impression upon him.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MISFORTUNES OF RESEMBLANCE.

MY brother Mark, Miss Langley—Miss Seldon"—explained Stephen, and then, noticing his abstraction, he exclaimed, "Why Mark! what is the matter, man? you look as if you saw a ghost," and turning to Jeanne, Stephen whisperingly added, "He has been very ill and really ought to be at home."

But Mark made no response to the introduction and still stood like a statue, looking at Margaret, who, in turn seemed quite as much amazed at sight of him.

Stepping forward, then, and laying a hand on Mark's shoulder, Stephen gently drew him into the room.

Slowly regaining possession of his faculties, Mark confusedly apologized for his strange behavior, saying that the closeness of the room had quite overcome him. He then explained to Stephen that Agnes had sent him to invite the ladies to join a driving party to the lake that afternoon, and that he hoped he might take back a favorable answer.

He had no idea Stephen was before him, he said, and so had brought a note of introduction from Mrs. Marston, begging Jeanne to "entertain my brother Mark, until I call for him, on my way home."

All the while he spoke, Margaret watched him, greatly excited and apparently making a swift comparison of the two men. She closely and breathlessly noted the insincerity of Mark's voice and the peculiar dropping of his eyelids as he glanced at her.

Each moment brought the conviction more fully to her, that she had done Stephen a terrible injustice and she fervently hoped that it might be so, even though it made her soul sink within her to realize the possibility of her having been guilty of such cruelty.

For the first time she looked at Stephen fairly, as he and Mark carried on a rather forced conversation with Jeanne, who remarked upon the great resemblance between the two brothers and rallied Stephen upon never having spoken of it.

"It is an old story to us," he answered. "It never occurred to me that every body did not know Mark and I are twins."

Margaret was now seized with a determination to test her suspicions. Carelessly passing out on a

little vernada, upon which the side windows opened, she bided her time, and, like some charmed thing, lured in spite of itself, to its fate, Mark Westland followed her.

The moment they were hidden from the inmates of the morning-room, Margaret turned upon him with, "Where is Beatrice, Mr. Westland?"

He seized her arm so roughly as to leave a mark on its soft flesh, but she did not feel it, so intensely was she watching him.

"Where did *you* come from?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"No matter, sir! answer my question. Where is Beatrice?"

"My dear girl," he answered, with suddenly feigned carelessness, "I haven't the *least* idea! I have never seen her since I left 'Great Oaks.' I hope all is well with her."

Margaret, fully assured now that she had made a terrible mistake attempted to return to Jeanne and Stephen, but Mark stepped before her and blocked the way.

With covert and crafty looks and the smoothest of words he tried to make her understand that it would be most impolitic for her to resurrect any old time experience of hers or his.

"What took place in those days, interests no one

here and you were so involved, that it would be unfortunate if any knowledge of the matter should come to your friends here," was the conclusion of his decidedly selfish argument.

"You may always count on me to shield you from all blame, however, and above all things else, you may count on my being *silent*."

Margaret managed to control herself sufficiently to merely bow and pass him, leaving him unanswered and wholly unenlighted as to her intentions or her estimate of him.

Returning to Jeanne, she spoke in her usual calm way, though it was plain to see that she was in a mood greatly differing from the one which prevailed when Jeanne's maid summoned her.

"Dear, excuse me a momeni if I ask Mr. Stephen's help in placing that new water color; his eye for effect, is so much more trustworthy than mine."

Moving toward the music-room, which also did duty as a picture-gallery and begging Stephen to follow her, she stopped at the door to add, "Mr. Mark will entertain you, Jeanne."

But "Mr. Mark" seemed strangely pre-occupied and decidedly uneasy during their absence, and Jeanne was heartily glad to have them return and to hear Stephen say, "Agnes has forgotten you, Mark, for she just drove by, and we must follow."

Making their *au revoirs* and carrying away to Agnes their regrets that they could not accept her invitation for the afternoon, as Jeanne was not yet equal to so much exertion, the brothers took their leave and as long as they were in sight Margaret watched them, while Jeanne somewhat impatiently watched her.

"So much mystery!" she thought. "Why does not Madge explain!"

But Jeanne did not have long to wait and when Margaret turned toward her, all her impatience and questioning vanished.

The bitterness had gone from Margaret's mouth, the scorn from her eyes, and there was nothing left but benumbing weakness.

Tears chased each other over her quivering face and her trembling limbs seemed hardly able to bear her to the lounge, where she sank into Jeanne's open arms.

XVI.

THOSE WHO SOW, REAP.

MARK WESTLAND devoutly wished himself any where else on this mundane sphere than just where he was, that bright September morning, as he left Mrs. Maxwell's, with his brother.

As much a man of the world as he prided himself in being, and as often as he had found himself in undesirable positions, he had never before felt the extremely uncomfortable helplessness which now beset him in every sense.

Glancing at Stephen's splendid proportions and noting his super-abundant vitality, he felt a great pang of envy which was only increased by the knowledge that his own reckless extravagance had dispersed his patrimony, dissipated his strength and stranded him upon the generosity of the man whose advice he had always scorned. It is hardly to be wondered at, that the additional burden of having an old escapade brought to light, should have reduced him to unwonted depths of discouragement.

Stephen had just heard a new chapter of his brother's life, with mixed disgust and sorrow.

His own life had run in such different channels, that it was out of the question for him to enter into a full conception of the outcome of a career absolutely devoid of any other motive than self indulgence, and his first impulse, on becoming acquainted with the story that Margaret told him in the music-room, was to turn from his brother in cold contempt.

As they walked along shoulder to shoulder, Stephen seriously reviewed the various bearings of the situation; how could he best attain justice for all. Natural affection and the sacred ties of blood and family pride, as well as an almost morbid shrinking from seeing or giving pain, lent a keenness to his perceptions and before they had gone far he had determined upon his course of action.

"Mark," he said, "I know every thing and there must be an end, at once, to the great wrong you are daily inflicting upon an innocent girl.

"I can see no reason for involving any one in an unpleasant publicity—such as the facts of your past life would bring upon them, and so, let us avoid that, and work out the right as quietly as possible."

He paused for a response, but Mark had lighted

a cigar, and gave no sign of what was passing in his mind.

"I suppose you are willing and ready to do your part, old fellow," Stephen added, wondering to himself how a man in his brother's position *could* seem so indifferent.

A shrug of the shoulders suggested a possible question and fired even Stephen's patient soul. They had just turned into their sister's grounds and there was no time to be lost, if Agnes was to be saved the mortification and worry of the present dilemma, and Stephen had made up his mind on *that* point.

"Sit down a moment and let us settle this business now," he said, taking one of the garden chairs at hand and pushing another toward Mark. "Now, what do you propose doing?"

Mark made himself as comfortable as the circumstances would allow, tipping one chair at a restful angle and bracing his feet against another, while he leaned his head against a tree trunk and slowly puffed little rings of smoke toward the sky.

Without changing his position or looking at Stephen, he finally said, "Confound my luck! it is all very well to say 'something must be done!' but what in time *can* a man do without money or

health. I wish I had the pluck to end my bothers. Life is a bore!"

Stephen repressed all the signs of impatience he felt, at the egotism and selfishness so unreservedly shown, at a time when other than personal considerations had the first claim to Mark's attention. But he could not entirely avoid a feeling of bitterness, as he recalled how sorely Mark had tried his patience during the last few years; how often he had been called upon to meet the demands of heavy gambling debts, the duns of angry creditors and the unrest of varied unpleasant possibilities, liable at any moment to be thrown carelessly upon his willing and always generous shoulders, by this ease-loving, reckless brother. Might it not be that now, though with depleted strength and a tarnished conception of the real prerogatives of life, the time had come when this man could be forced to take his place among responsible, earnest, worthy workers and gain balance and decency of purpose, through tardy effort.

"Mark," said Stephen, after a pause, "You are too young and too clever a man to yield your place in life yet. Are you perfectly satisfied to slip along, among the kind of people you generally are with, and never know any other companionship or pleasures?"

"Oh, my people and pleasures suit me well enough, with a plenty of money to keep things going. It is *money* that makes success," answered Mark, quite untouched by the appeal in Stephen's tone and words.

A few more whirls of smoke, were lazily sent skyward and then he added,

"I tell you old man, I am strapped! dead broke! couldn't raise a hundred to save my neck! so what is the use of talking. I know very well that you have done the generous thing by me altogether too often, and I am not going to ask you to do any more; but, for Heaven's sake, don't preach at me, for I never was cut out for a saint and I won't be a hypocrite."

"But, Mark, you are an able-bodied man; another month will bring you out as good as new and you'll then be equal to re-establishing yourself and doing the square thing by others. Now I will make you an offer"—and here followed a somewhat prolonged business talk, during which Stephen's face grew bright again and Mark actually threw off his apathy so much as to make them look more than ever like each other. But Agnes spied them from the dining-room window and called out with house-wifely impatience, "Why in the world

are you keeping us all waiting? Luncheon has been served for half an hour!"

"Not a word to her, Mark, on your honor," Stephen said, as they responded to the summons and entered the house.

"All right, Steve! you are a trump!" answered Mark, warmly.

XVII.

UNSNARLING THE TANGLES.

IT seemed weeks instead of hours to Stephen Westland before he again stood in the still, sunny morning room at Mrs. Maxwell's. Since leaving Jeanne and Margaret, he had come to a kindly but practical and definite arrangement with Mark and had the comfort of feeling that the idolized mother herself could not have been more gentle or more considerate, while he really indulged a faint hope that the future might prove Mark less unworthy of his love and sympathy than the past had.

A few words with Agnes had convinced her of his perfect right to claim and hold Jeanne's heart and hand. He felt it just to all concerned now, that the one cloud which had over-shadowed his intercourse with his sister should be dispelled, and there was a solemn consolation in the thought that death had drawn a veil which would make any painful disclosure unnecessary. Agnes Marston never will know half the wrongs her brother had suffered, and so, may still cherish a half-regretful

memory of the beautiful but misguided and ill-fated sister-in-law who "was so inappreciative of dear Stephen" as she expressed it, but she quickly put all that by as a vanished fruitage of the past, and most gladly accepted a new opportunity of showing her own real and deep affection for her brother by sending a sisterly greeting to Jeanne.

"Tell her I am coming directly, myself, to let her know what I think of you both," she said laughingly to Stephen, as he left her for Jeanne and the explanation which the latter was still awaiting.

* * * * * * *

Poor Margaret's nerves had at last yielded to the long strain upon them and Jeanne had made sundry vain attempts at quieting and soothing the hysterical condition into which her hitherto self-reliant friend had fallen.

With tears and sobs she had thrown herself down by Jeanne and in broken and often incoherent words bewailed the cruel mistake she had made.

"How could I have done it? Why was I so obstinate. Why did I not see the difference!" she moaned, over and over again.

Jeanne caressed her and tried to comfort her, all the while trying also to catch some explanation of the cause for all this excitement, but Margaret raved on.

"Oh! how can I quiet her," Jeanne finally cried to herself, now more alarmed about Margaret than worried about her own affairs. Still the half crazed girl muttered and sobbed on, lying prone upon the lounge where Jeanne had half coaxed and half dragged her.

After a while exhaustion produced an uneasy sleep and Jeanne's place was supplemented by her maid while she went in search of refreshments to fortify herself for what might yet be before her.

Mrs. Maxwell received the bare fact of Margaret's indisposition without surprise or questioning, and Jeanne's quiet reserve evidently impressed her aunt as being in every way consistent with her still convalescent state.

"Take a good long nap this afternoon, dear," she said. "You do not look quite like yourself yet. I have been at the 'Home' all the morning and must go straight out again. We are planning a final 'tea' before everybody goes away. You and Margaret will have to help, but you do not look much like it now."

Tenderly tapping her niece's white cheek, she left the room for her afternoon work—soon followed by Jeanne who heard Stephen's voice in the hall and ran swiftly to meet him.

"Oh, Stephen! how glad I am to see you!" she

cried eagerly. "Our poor Madge is quite worn out with all this trouble and I am entirely in the dark."

She stood before him with her blue eyes full of tears and a tremor of faintness seemed stealing over her again as Stephen's arm caught her trembling figure.

"Poor child! do you not know yet? All this time in suspense? It is cruel," he said. "Come into the library while Margaret rests and I will repeat to you what she so delicately and bravely told me this morning then we will both thank her again."

"My love! my love," he whispered when at last, they were alone in the library, and then, folding her in his strong arms, he fully realized how narrowly his happiness had escaped a frightful if not fatal suspension.

Jeanne begged to be at once told what there yet remained to be known and then came the story of Margaret's life in a distant southern city, with her first engagement as companion, after the death of her mother and her consequent homelessness.

This family had consisted of an influential lawyer, his wife, a son—then in college—and a daughter, but little younger than Margaret.

Beatrice Campbell had been an invalid during

her girlhood, and seemed hardly more than a child, in spite of her sixteen years.

Of rare beauty and exceeding lovliness of character, she was wonderfully free from the usual effects of great luxury and incessant petting, and seemed to forget herself in living for the pleasure and good of others. Having spent her life in her sumptuous country home, surrounded by devoted relatives, and friends, she knew absolutely nothing of outside people or things, except as she got her impressions from the carefully culled literature and art with which she was surfeited.

Max, her brother, was much away from home. It having been deemed necessary that his education should be conducted upon the most liberal foundations, he had been placed at one of the best boy's schools in the country when but twelve years old, and since then had only spent his vacations at home.

Unfortunately, he had become a fast and dissolute youth and the source of great anxiety to his parents.

Margaret shrank from him with intuitive aversion, on first acquaintance, while he by force of the subtle charm of steadfast opposition, became more and more fascinated by and attracted to her.

Margaret's peculiar strength of character and her

natural tact, soon placed her in much the same attitude toward Beatrice that she now held toward Jeanne and she quickly found herself forced to confess to her friend that Max tormented her by his attentions whenever he spent his vacations with them: then, the two conspired to prevent *tete-à-tetes*, at the same time, trying to avoid making his home coming anything but happy.

On one of his visits, he brought with him his especial friend, Mark Westland.

Mark was enough older and more than enough better versed in the ways of the world, to find no difficulty in setting himself up as a sort of model and leader in all things to Max, and it suited his purposes admirably to have so faithful an ally in his numerous plottings and escapades.

Remarkably handsome, polished and intelligent, it became an easy task to attract and then fascinate his friend's sister. Indeed, he might have wooed and won her in open and honorable suit, for no one would have put any obstacle in his way; but they both drifted along in the pleasant paths of sentiment beneath the blue skies and blossom-scented groves of Louisiana, until Beatrice horrified Margaret one night by confessing to her that Mark and she were man and wife. They had been secretly married, just before he went away, by the clergy-

man of a parish in a distant quarter of the city near them, and she concluded her confession by adding that "Mark would soon come and claim her."

In answer to Margaret's question, "*Why* did you do it? Oh, how *could* you do it?" she looked surprised, as any child might, who in no wise realized the importance of the step, and only said, "Mark said if I loved him I would make him sure of me —and so I did. Why! dear Margaret—what does it matter, if no one knows. It was only to prove to him that I *do* love him—and he is coming very soon." Then she made Margaret promise silence and for weeks their topic, or rather *Beatrice's*, of conversation was Mark—his love for her—hers for him and his speedy return.

But, alas! the too trusting child waited in vain. Days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, until even letters ceased to come and all the information that could be gained of Mark Westland's where-abouts came through Max, who unwittingly added the last touch of mortification and despair to his young sister's heart by writing of Mark's conquests, his travels and his general hilarity, but not a message or a line came from him to Beatrice.

Many times did Margaret implore Beatrice to let her tell her father and mother and have their protection and support in compelling Mark Westland

either to return or relinquish all claim upon her, but the poor, humiliated girl could not summon courage enough to go through with such an ordeal, dreading her parents' wrath against him almost as much as she shrank from forcing herself upon the man she had so loved and believed in.

Margaret had suffered, too, as only a naturally truthful and open-hearted girl can, when put in a false position and compelled to conceal the truth.

Finally, Beatrice grew so ill and depressed in spirits that her physician ordered her to have an entire change of scene, and, as if her burdens were not heavy enough, just as they were ready to start for Europe, Margaret was called to devote herself to her only remaining relative—a maiden aunt—whose claim upon her could not be set aside.

So was Beatrice Campbell deprived of her greatest comforter and best friend.

Margaret, after soothing the last days of her aunt, found herself, once more, alone and homeless.

Just at this time, Jeanne Langley was visiting near Margaret's aunt's home, and, learning that Miss Selden was desirous of securing a situation as companion, had engaged her services, so opening a new chapter in both their lives.

Having brought the story to Jeanne's participa-

tion in it—though only able to outline it from Margaret's hasty telling—Stephen went on to say,

"Margaret, perhaps morbidly, but none the less intensely, feels herself responsible for all this concealment. She could never bring herself to tell even you any thing of it, Jeanne. Never dreaming of seeing Mark Westland again, you can imagine her feelings when I appeared among your admirers. She knew nothing of Mark's family, nothing of his having a brother—and never for one instant doubted my identity until he and I stood before her, side by side. Her loyalty to Beatrice's confidence and her fear for you have almost killed her. To add to her unhappiness, she saw Beatrice last spring, in New York, and so judged my statement that my wife was dead as only a fresh proof of my villany.

"Altogether, it has been a painful 'comedy of errors, sweet one," said Stephen in conclusion, ending his story with many tender endearments, "and we must now take up all these tangled threads and endeavor to weave from them a happier future."

"But Stephen," questioned Jeanne, "how *can* two brothers be so utterly unlike in soul and so distractingly the same in appearance? Why! I am afraid *I* shall get you mixed up if I do not carefully guard against such a calamity:" and then, slipping

a slender jeweled pin from the lace at her throat, she fastened it in his scarf, saying:

"Guard it with your life, dear, for I belong to its owner."

XVIII.

BEATRICE EXPLAINS HER POSITION.

RICHARD MANNERING HOWARD spent a very bad afternoon with himself, after leaving Beatrice Campbell to her maid's care. He had walked out of Congress Spring Park, with small thought for his immediate future and absolutely no fixed purpose. On he strode, past the "Union" and the "States" and up North Broadway, until he reached Woodlawn Park.

Neither heat nor fatigue made any impression upon him. His battle was with his inner self and for his peace of mind, and, so far as he could see, there was but little chance of his winning.

His theories had been one thing, while experience was quite another, he now found, to his consternation. That a man of well disciplined mind, should be able to control his affections and impulses, was something which he had never questioned. He certainly had as good right to claim such attributes as any man ever had, yet he lacked sufficient force of will to forget that cold

face and to turn from the temptation of seeing it again.

He knew how mercilessly another man would have been scoffed at by him under the same circumstances, and how he would have derided such feelings as weak, unmanly and effeminate. Now, that this had become his state of mind, he learned, among other things, a newer charity and broader sympathy for his fellow men.

When he finally turned towards his hotel, the only triumph gained was a mere surface calm, which was at least serviceable, in that it enabled him to appear about as usual to the people he met.

For a day or two he hung about the "States," hoping against hope for some message; finally, remembering his social obligations to Mrs. Habersham, he called at the Kensington to find that Beatrice and her mother had left, the morning after her ill turn, for a trip through Lake George and the mountains.

A week more of restlessness brought to him the conviction that it was due his nervous system and general health that he too should go northward and Blanche Atherton's note found him in comfortable quarters at Lake George, instead of Elizabethtown, though it was at the former place that he had found Mrs. and Miss Campbell, and there that he

began the delicate process of re-instating himself in tneir daily life.

Mrs. Campbell had no other objection to his presence than that the sight of him always brought before her all the tortures of that dreadful time in Italy when chance made him the bearer of the news of her boy's tragic death in the burning theatre.

As for Beatrice, she had more reasons for turning from him than he, poor fellow, could imagine.

Since the hasty and almost fatal yielding to Mark Westland's stronger will and fascinations, her spirit had known no peace. Deprived of Margaret Selden's affectionate companionship, she resolutely closed her lips and shut within her own heart the constantly increasing sting of mortified and neglected love.

The first outward result was physical weakness. There were days and weeks when she prayed and hoped to die. Possibly she would have died, if her father's sudden illness and death and her brother's horrible end had not aroused her to the necessity of comforting and sustaining her almost crazed mother.

Then came the reaction. The fascination which she had not unnaturally mistaken for love, began to change, little by little; first, into a bewildered doubting of all things; then came full appreciation

of Mark's utter unworthiness, and, finally, she was filled with an intense loathing of the man and an ever present fear of his return.

Out of all this, grew a morbid shrinking from society in general, and from men in particular.

Then her mental state became one of pitiable uncertainty. She found herself suspecting the motives of those she was thrown into contact with, and feeling that she could never again be sure that every one was not acting a part, as she was. She never could forget that, being a married woman, she was sailing under false colors, and was bound, not only to bear whatever punishment came to her bravely, but to avoid misleading others and permitting consequent suffering to come to them.

When Richard Howard was first thrown into her society, she was off her guard. He came by accident—if there be any such thing—and, being the son of old friends of her parents, he was put upon terms of exceptional intimacy at once. She was, too, so much younger than Howard and considered herself so entirely out of his orbit, that it never occurred to her to throw up her usual lines of reserve against his friendly advances.

It naturally followed that, for the first time since Mark Westland came into her life, she took a positive comfort and satisfaction in the daily events of

travel and sight seeing which brought Howard and herself into almost constant intercourse and made him as one of the family.

Then came the closer intimacy of great sorrow and affliction, and, before she had suspected such a possibility, she found herself possessed by a passion as deep and strong as it was hopeless.

Mrs. Campbell never knew why Beatrice fled from Milan so suddenly. She would have questioned her, if her own heart had not been so crushed by its misery. It was there that the fire in the theatre had robbed them of the son and brother, and so it seemed only natural that the place should become unbearable to her child. So they went, without warning, leaving only three lines for Howard's comfort: "Thanks for your great kindness. We can bear this place no longer. *Au revoir* until time makes us more brave."

The next time Howard and Beatrice Campbell saw each other was at the close of his reading, in the Kensington drawing room.

Beatrice had learned, through Mrs. Habersham, of his being in Saratoga. She had fought out her battle stoutly; had remained in her room whenever she knew he was in the neighborhood, and, from her window overlooking the Avenue, had watched, day after day, for a chance glimpse of

him, as he passed. This, too, was at the very time when there was no chance of her seeing Margaret Selden, who was then by the sea and who had heard nothing from or of Beatrice, since early spring, when they had met for an hour in New York.

The morning of the reading had found her weak. The longing to hear his voice completely wrecked her resolution and she had slipped in by the window and placed herself where she fancied she was quite safe from discovery. Mrs. Habersham had pleaded, it is true, but it was her own heart that had conquered her judgment.

The mask of indifference which she had attained by long and bitter effort and which she had effectually assumed towards Howard, during the last part of their Italian sojourn, covered a warm and emotional temperament and her subsequent escape to Congress Spring Park was prompted by her hope of gaining from Nature what only Nature's God could bestow.

"Oh, where *can* peace be found?" was her heart's cry. "Must I suffer always?"

Her thoughts had been of Howard when he saw her coming up the winding path in the Park and it was not strange that the sudden appearance of Stephen Westland, whom she mistook for Mark, struck her to the earth.

Recovering, she fled from Howard, just as she had before, with the additional terror of again falling into the way of Mark Westland, lending wings to her flight; but only to find herself, at the end of a week, sitting opposite Howard in the dining room of a mountain hotel.

Human nature has its limitations of endurance and Beatrice at once knew that she had reached hers. She held herself in hand with dignity but she no longer thought of flight. The intercourse between Howard and herself was full of commonplaces, on the surface, but she trembled at the knowledge that this was only a thin crusting-over of dangerous and profound feeling.

At last after weeks of patient waiting, Howard's opportunity came. Mrs. Campbell had excused herself and left them alone on the hotel piazza, with no likelihood of interruption or outside notice. He was prepared for the occasion by long hours of deliberation and spoke without hesitation.

"Miss Beatrice," he said, "I am not going to inflict myself upon you any longer, and before I go I must say a few words. I have no reason to think or hope that my going or staying is of the slightest moment to you. Perhaps I shall seem unmanly in confessing, after all your coldnesss, that I am — fortunately or unfortunately — so consti-

tuted, that you are and always will be the one love of my life. In going away, I turn my back upon all that makes a lover's eyes glad; but I go because I have come to that point in my heart experience where I know it will soon be out of the question for me to meet you with the total absence of sentiment which you demand and expect.

"Will you give me one promise, to make my going a little less hard? If the moment ever comes when I can serve you in the slightest way, either as friend or lover, will you send for me, no matter where I may be? for I shall be *waiting to my dying day*!"

He stood by her, with outstretched hands and pleading eyes and she—Oh heavens! how cruel seemed life to her, at that moment.

With both hands pressed against her heart and every nerve vibrating with the restraint placed upon it by her sense of stern duty, she stood and gave him a long, kind look.

"How noble and unselfish you are," she murmured. "How grieved I am that I must cause you suffering. Yes, I do promise with all my heart, that if I am ever free——"

"*Free*! Beatrice! *free*! What do you mean?" he cried.

Alas for her! In that moment of self abnegation she had given him the one ray of light which turned him from a passive, suffering man, into a very giant of fierce and determined questioning.

"Beatrice, *tell* me what you mean—free! do you, then, love?" he repeated, seizing her hands and drawing her close to his bended face.

"If you love, tell me," he pleaded. "It will be kinder to kill my one little spark of hope at once, if it must die. Oh Beatrice, tell me all the truth —I *must* know all."

Standing back, suddenly, and folding his hands behind him, like a soldier preparing for his death shot, he added, "You see how calmly I can meet my fate.—Free! That does not mean love—Speak, dear heart."

She felt the moment to be a vital one and yearned to share her wretched secret with him. Why not? Would it not cure him sooner than anything else? His gaze was burning into her heart—She *must* speak. "Richard—Mr. Howard—perhaps I should have told you before but—it is so hard to see things rightly in time. No one in my family knows—but I am *married*."

She had dropped her head and lowered her voice, as if convicting herself of a crime.

He staggered and then recovered himself, all the

while looking upon the shrinking figure with eyes that saw not; listening with ears that could not comprehend, until he found voice to say, although in a wholly unnatural tone—"Married! may I know if you love your husband?"

Strange as the question was, it did not offend her.

"You shall know everything," she answered. "Why not? What do I owe the man who married me—a simple child—in secret and then deserted me? I was but sixteen and knew nothing of the world. He was fascinating and vowed he could not live without me; that he could not leave me for one short week, unless I was made his wife—and I believed him, thought I loved him and—we were married. He left me within an hour and I never saw him again until that morning then you saw me faint at his feet in Congress Spring Park."

"*Stephen Westland*," exclaimed Howard, wildly.

He remembered Stephen's noble face and bearing and felt that all his faith in man must give way, if that man could be such a brute.

The look in his face made her draw back a little constrainedly.

"Beatrice, forgive me, if I frighten you," he said, "but there must be some dreadful mistake. Do you

mean to say that Stephen Westland is your husband?"

"No, not Stephen. His name is *Mark* Westland —that man, at the sight of whom I fainted. Oh Richard, how can I love him!"

Sinking in a chair, she covered her face with her trembling hands. Howard still dazed, drew another chair to her side.

"Beatrice," he faltered, "I am so stunned that even the power of speech is almost denied me. It will make things clearer if you will answer a few questions.

"Does any one know of your marriage, but your husband and yourself?"

"Margaret Selden, my companion and best friend."

"Where is she now?"

"I do not know. Some where at the sea shore I think. I have not heard from her for some months. We shall always love each other, but the past is so painful that we seldom try to meet."

"Beatrice, are you sure that you do not love that man?"

"*Sure!*" She turned on him with flashing eyes and indignantly exclaimed, "How can you ask such a question? Was ever a girl insulted as I have been? Was ever a man so cruel? Sure—I have prayed night and day, not to mortally *hate* him."

"Then you shall be free!" he cried, vehemently.

She flushed and paled at the thought, but laid a trembling hand upon his arm.

"Richard, be careful, I cannot bear much more," she said. "What do you mean?"

"Will you trust me fully and let me act for you in this matter?"

"Oh, my friend, I do believe in your wisdom and in your deep interest in my welfare—but, what will you do? Must I see him? Must mamma know?"

She was deathly white again and Howard saw the necessity of quieting her, without delay.

"I believe the thing can be managed without any publicity, Beatrice. The man is a miserable coward—*must* be—and will be easy to handle;" and then he forgot all questions of policy for a moment and clenched his hands in sudden wrath.

"Let me see you safely to your door; and then, Beatrice, may God keep you and help me to do the right thing for your happiness.

I shall be off to Saratoga long before you are up in the morning—and now, be brave, just as you have been for all these hard years, and I will yet see you free from *him!*"

XIX.

DAYS OF PROMISE.

A WEEK later, Stephen Westland was sitting by his brother's side, in Mrs. Marston's library. The excitement of the revelations connected with Mark's extrordinary career were proving disastrous to that unfortunate man, and grave thoughts were now entertained by his friends as to his recovery. With the carelessness of nature and habit, he had promised speedy justice to his neglected wife, as soon as his strength returned, and Stephen could not, in his brother's present feeble condition, do any thing more than await further developments.

On this particular afternoon, Mark had fallen into a feverish slumber, and, the sound of the door bell threatening to disturb him, Stephen carefully tip-toed out of the room to admit the guest, before a second summons should be given.

Opening the door noiselessly, he recognized the face of Howard as that of the stranger whom he had left that noon in July, in Congress Spring Park,

and whose card he had received from the officer at the Park gate.

"Ah, Mr. Howard! I am glad to see you. Walk in."

He checked himself, however, in the very act of extending his hand in cordial welcome as he then suddenly perceived that Howard was regarding him bitterly and contemptuously.

"Can I see you alone for a few moments?" demanded Howard, sternly.

"Certainly—walk in," answered Stephen, wondering what ailed the man.

Opening the door of a small reception room, which was the apartment most remote from the room where Mark was, Stephen ushered his guest into it and asked, "What can I do for you?"

"You can tell me if you are the husband of Beatrice Campbell?" was the cold answer.

Stephen Westland's expression changed instantly, as did his manner.

"Mr. Howard, I am not," he replied, "but my brother *is*. Will you sit down, now, and talk to me? You cannot well be more anxious than I am to see justice done that poor child, but—" rising quickly—"follow me one moment and be as quiet as you can."

Crossing the room, Stephen opened a door, passed

down a hall and noiselessly drew aside the portieres of a second door, at the end of the hall—beckoning Howard to look into the room.

There lay Mark in his invalid chair breathing unevenly and nervously. Bright hectic spots burned in his cheeks and his eye-lids were but half closed, while his parched lips were parted in the effort for breath and his long, thin fingers hung over each arm of the chair in an attitude of extreme weakness.

Howard looked at him and then felt his rage melt away. It was not for him to meddle with a dying man.

Silently they returned to the little room and before they parted the past, present and future were discussed as only two friends could reveal to each other their individual and mutual interests.

There are natures to whom the conventional preliminiaries of acquaintanceship are entirely nonessential. Richard Mannering Howard and Stephen Westland were men of this stamp.

The next morning, Beatrice received a long letter and the tears which were poured out upon it came about equally from profound bitterness and sweet hope.

The shadow of death was bringing to her and to all who were connected with Mark Westland, a for-

givenness and charity which years of effort on his part might have failed to inspire. Mark Westland gave his friends but little opportunity to nurse and watch over him. As he had lived, so he died: like a meteor he flashed out of their sight and—Beatrice Campbell was free.

* * * * * * * * *

Here we must leave our friends, for deep wounds heal slowly, and Beatrice feels a melancholy pleasure in forbidding herself the luxury of companionship, at present; though she has long since confessed to herself where her heart is, and Howard's delicate forbearance and patience is losing him nothing in her estimation. But—if rumors tells truly—Saratoga wedding-bells are to ring right merrily all through the spring and summer months now close at hand. Pretty Amy Leighton has not been so unmindful of her own *affairs de cœur* as to miss securing her "prize" or rather—the man of her choice has put all the "long line" of suitors behind him and they must content themselves with the friendship of two charming people instead of one. Jeanne Langley and Stephen Westland are planning a lovely wedding in Bethesda Church, in the golden September days close upon the coming season's close. So everybody will stay that can get an invitation, for it will be a beautiful sight. The flower-

laden chancel, the vested choir and clergy, the crowds of loving friends and two such brides as Jeanne, golden haired, blue-eyed Jeanne, and her beloved Margaret. Yes! the secret will be known by all before long, so why not have the delight of telling it first?

Margaret declares she is only a "substitute" and would not have had a ghost of a chance with "Arthur" if he had been successful in routing Stephen.

Arthur Graham very wisely "gives her the floor" when she begins to talk in that strain, but it is easy to see that he is quite satisfied with his "substitute," and no human being can boast of having received the offer of his hand and heart but our loyal Margaret, however much or little Mark Westland's appearanee upon the scene may have had to do with his choice.

Blanche Atherton told Mrs. Worthington, early this spring, that she believed Mr. Howard must be in love, for she never in her life, saw a man so improved.

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Kate Worthington smiled to think of the sensation in store for "Dick's" immense circle of admirers—

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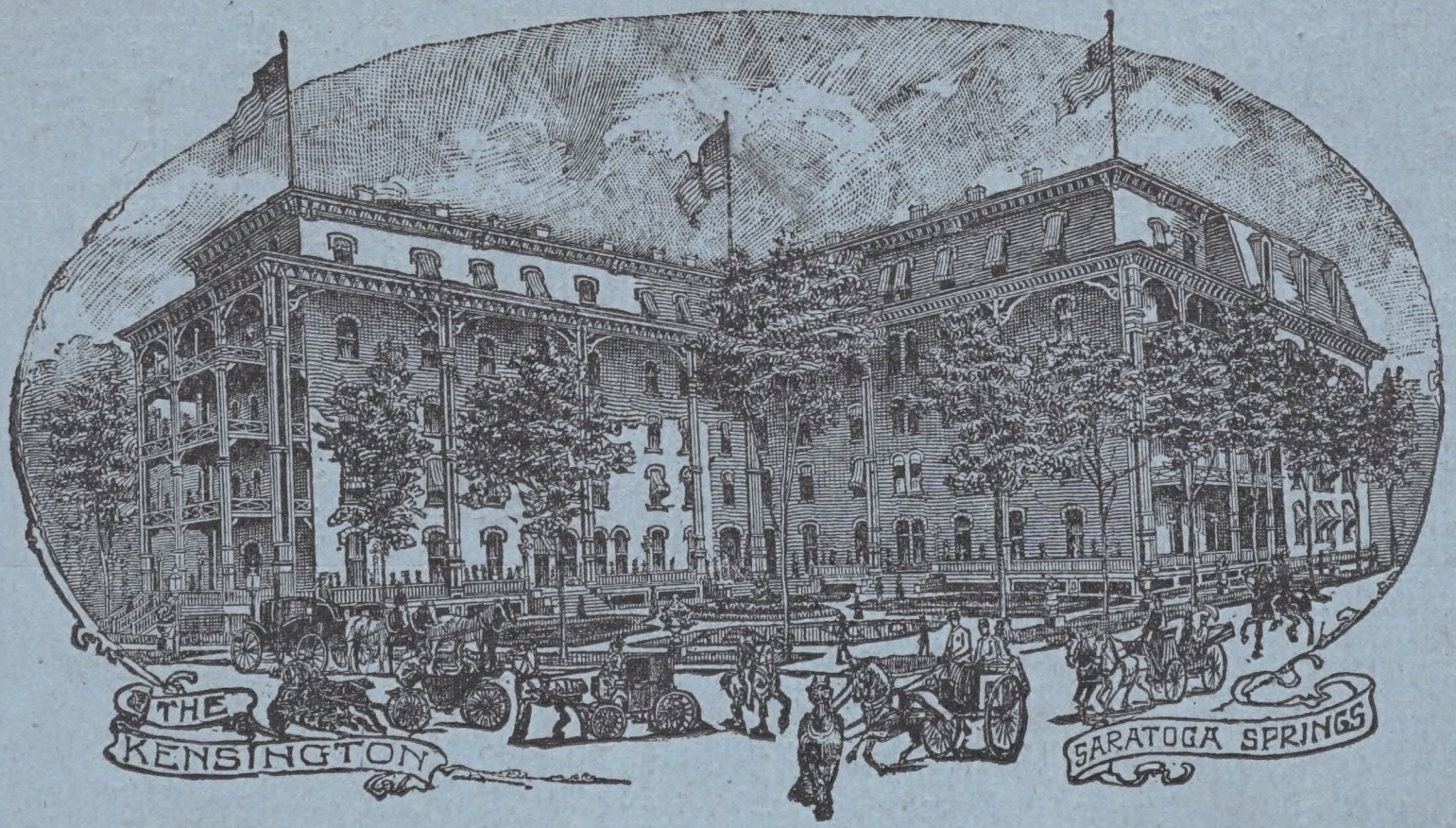
"In the book before us Mr. Sheppard has nowhere swerved from his purpose of showing in a clear, connected and very compendious form, not what Darwin may have meant, or has been charged with meaning, but what he actually said."—*New York Sun.*

(D. Appleton & Co., Publishers, New York.)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